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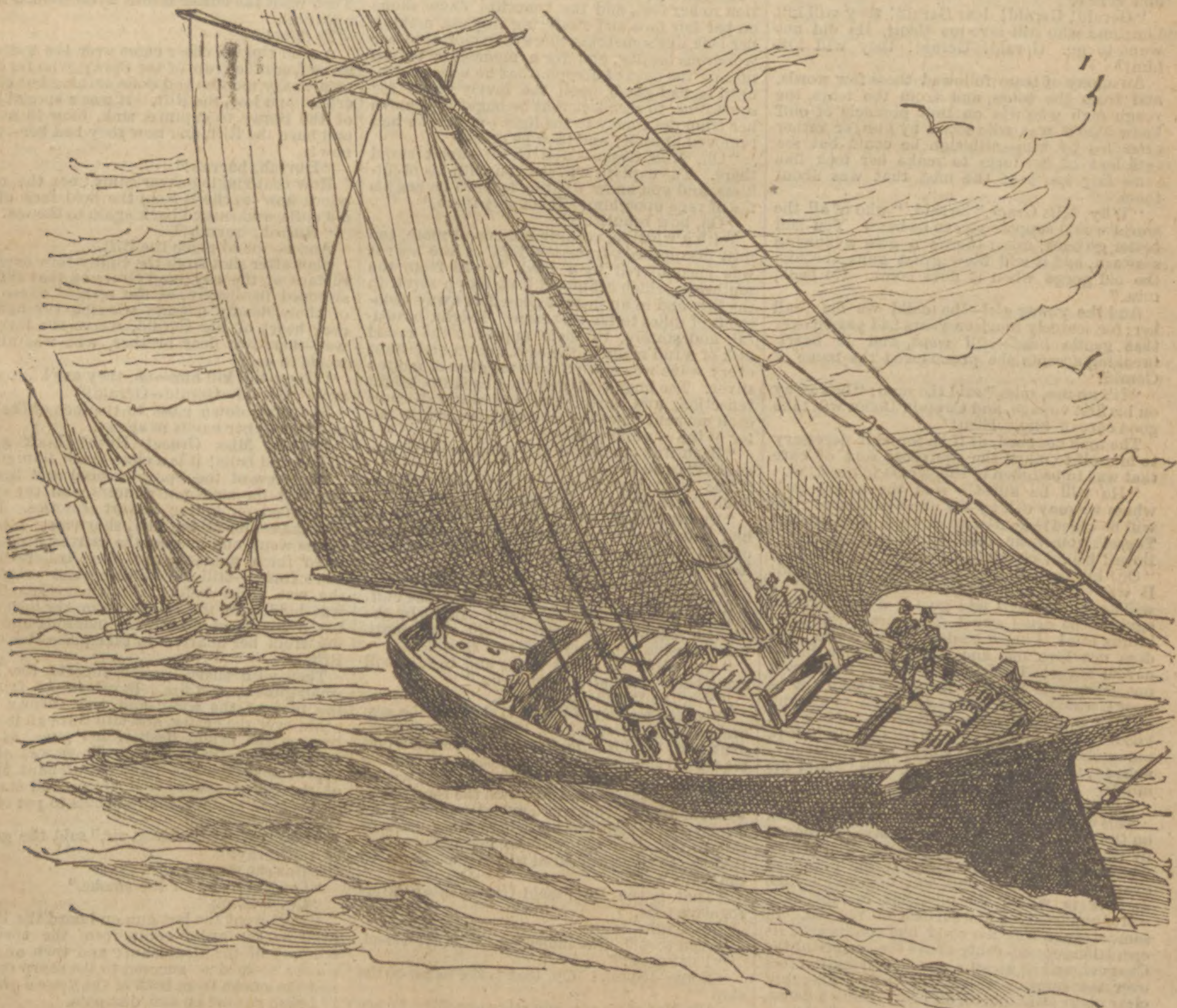
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THE SMUGGLER CUTTER; or, THE CAVERN IN THE CLIFF.

(A SEA AND SHORE ROMANCE.)

BY J. D. CONROY.



THE RIFT AND THE SPRAY.

The Smuggler Cutter;

OR,

THE CAVERN IN THE CLIFF.

A Sea and Shore Romance.

BY J. D. CONROY.

CHAPTER I.

THE CUP AND THE LIP.

It was Heaven's artillery that awakened the echoes of the Lizard Point, on the Kentish coast of old England, on the night of a drear November day, in the year of Grace, 1822.

Boom! came the sullen sound; and then there followed a sharp, rattling sound which, to a practiced ear, might suggest the report of small-arms, although where the seeming contest could be going on—whether on the actual coast or to the left, bending to the Northern Ocean, or to the right, where the waters of the Channel washed the most fertile shores of England, it was difficult to say; for owing to the many different densities of the atmosphere, the sounds were deflected in various directions.

But there were two persons on the shore who seemed—either from accurate foreknowledge, or instinctively from the interest they felt in a something, that these sounds suggested danger—to guess their import.

In a little hollow, formed by a dip of the level of the beetling cliffs on either side of it, and which little hollow led by an irregular cutting right down a jagged, slippery and perilous pathway to the storm-lashed beach, were these two persons. The mist of the November eve was about them in pulsating masses. The damp exhalations settled heavily upon their clothing; but for a time they moved not and spoke not—all other senses seemed absorbed in the one of intense listening.

Then it was with startling earnestness that one of those persons spoke; and by the start that the other gave, and his sudden exclamation of surprise, it was evident that up to that moment he did not know of the presence of his companion; and that companion's voice, although there was distress in its tones, was sweet and gentle.

"Gerald! Gerald! dear Gerald! they will kill him; and who will love me then? He did not want to go. Gerald! Gerald! they will kill him!"

An agony of tears followed these few words, and from the tones, and from the tears, the rough man who was on that pinnacle of cliff knew who it was who stood by him, or rather crouched by him—although he could but see sufficient of her form to make her look like some fair spirit of the mist that was about them.

"Why, Miss Grace," he said, "who of all the world would suppose you to be here? You had better go back, miss; there's a gale a-blowing seaward, and it will blow great guns through the old gorge when it does come. Go back, miss."

And the young girl—the child we may call her; for scarcely fourteen years had passed over that gentle head—still wept, and in heart-breaking accents she pronounced the name of Gerald!

"It's no use, miss," said the man; "he's away on his first voyage, and Captain Dolan will take good care of him. Hem!"

The man coughed, as if he found it necessary to himself to mark the equivocal sort of care that was to be taken of the person in question.

"He will be killed!" said the young girl, whom we may call by the name of Grace. "He will be killed!—gentle, good, kind, dear Gerald! There! you hear that!—you hear, Joseph?" Boom! boom! came the rapid reports of cannon. "Oh! my poor, dear brother—my poor Gerald! It was so cruel, so very cruel to take him! I will not live here; I will go far away. There, again!—the cruel guns! They are killing him! killing him! I know he does not love him. He does not love me, and I will not love him—never! never! I told him I would not; I will not have him for my father—he shall not be poor Gerald's father; he is not good to us; and now he has taken dear Gerald, to kill him! I know he has; and there will be nobody to love me—nobody to say kind words to me—nobody, nobody, nobody. I will die—I wish I could die now!"

"Don't you go on so, miss. Ah!"

This exclamation from the man who was then on the cliffs, as a sort of sentinel, was occasioned by rather a curious phenomenon. That there was an agitation in the air that his practiced eyes saw betokened wind, was manifest by the manner in which the mist had become, as it were, unparted on the surface of the sea. In some strange way the wind had commenced its operations considerably above the surface of the Channel, and at about a couple of hundred feet over the surging water, there was a tolerably clear night atmosphere, all below being a dense, moving mass of vapor, which hid all things. The phenomenon we have alluded to was the

sudden projection from out of this misty ocean right up into the clear air of a rocket, the bright-blue tints of which scattered themselves for a moment in a shower of sparkling spray, that fell extinguished into the mist below.

The exclamation of the scout on the cliff had attracted the attention of Grace; and she removed her hands from over her eyes and face, where she had clasped them, and looked up.

"What is that?"

"Nothing, miss Grace—nothing."

"Ah! I see. A shower of blue-lights from the sky!"

She had seen the last of the rocket, and in another moment all was darkness again.

"Is it a broken star?" she said.

"Perhaps so, miss; but indeed, miss, you must not stay here!"

"I will stay here!"

"But I—really, miss—where is Mrs. Wagner?"

"I don't know, Joseph. I don't want to know. You are not so—so unkind as the rest, and you will let me stay?"

"Spikes and bolts!" muttered the man to himself. "I can't help it; I can't make her go. The signal must show, and there's an end of it?"

Grace had not been able to see what he was about, but in reality, from the moment that he had seen the rocket emerge from the misty sea, he had been busy; for it was a special duty he was placed there to perform. From a small case, that looked as if it might inclose a fishing-rod, he took a piece of iron rod, about four feet in height, one end of which was spiked and sharpened, and by that means he stuck it up in the scant loam that covered the chalk cliff. This iron rod was hollow, and in the upper end of it he inserted what looked like an iron saucer, with a projection at its under side, to fit into the hollow of the tube. Into that saucer then he broke what looked like a cartridge. Another moment, and he had lit a match, which he protected in the hollow of his hand; he placed the match in the saucer among the contents of the seeming cartridge. Then there was a slight evolution of smoke, and then a beautiful blue flame shot upward, and cast its radiance upon the old cliff, and streamed out upon the mist and the sea.

The man had, at the moment of lighting this beacon, flung himself flat in the hollow; but the young girl had risen from her crouching position to her feet, and the beautiful flame shone on her fair face and clustering ringlets, making her look like something more than mortal in her wondrous beauty, and for a moment or two so mazing the eyes of Joseph, that he was unable, until he had gazed upon the lovely vision for some time, to recollect that he ought to remove her from proximity to the light even as he had removed himself; and then he cried:

"Oh, Miss Grace—Miss Grace—don't stand there. The captain will see you with his night-glass, and you know what he is when he has his fits of rage upon him. Don't stay there."

"Oh, how beautiful!"

With a whirling rush, in a moment more, the mist disappeared from the face of the sea; it was encountered by a fresh breeze from the southeast, which crumpled it up like a scroll in the fire, and in an instant chased it away thousands of miles to far off oceans. Bright, beautiful, and stately, to them appeared the broad disk of a full moon in the east, and in an instant every wave was crested with the glow of molten silver. The huge cliffs reflected back the bright reflection, and earth, air, and water became each moment more suffused with the gentle luster of the glorious satellite.

"Beautiful, oh, beautiful!" again cried Grace, as she clasped her hands.

The scout had flung a heavy piece of tarpaulin over the blue light, and extinguished it.

"Spikes and bolts!" were the only words he had uttered—the expression being a favorite one in the way of exclamation, and meaningless in all other respects.

"The Rift—the Rift!" cried Grace, now as she stood still nearer to the verge of the cliff, and her luxuriant fair hair being caught by the night breeze was scattered in wild and beautiful confusion about her neck and shoulders.

"The Rift! I see it now; and Gerald will come back—he shall not go again."

"Yes, the Rift!" said Joseph.

From the motion of his hand, toward the sea, and from the direction of his gaze, it was evident that, by this name Rift, he indicated a cutter-rigged vessel, which was apparently beating up before the wind for the deep bay that was at that part of the coast, and which the foreland so well sheltered. She was evidently pursued by a schooner, which was carrying such a press of sail to endeavor to overtake her agile enemy, that she at times appeared to careen almost to the water's edge.

"That is the Rift?" said Grace, in an interrogative tone.

"Yes, miss."

"And that?" She indicated the other vessel.

"The Spray."

"Spray—Spray? Oh, that is the name of the ship."

"His Majesty's revenue schooner, Miss Grace—the Spray—in chase of the Rift, smuggling

cutter, Captain Dolan owner and captain. There, Miss Grace, now you have heard it all—if you did not know it before."

"I did know it. He told me."

"Your father?"

"He told me," added Grace, speaking in a musing tone. "He told me that, to get money, the people who had the power to do so made wicked laws, for the love of money, and that they said people should not bring from one country to another the things that each produced for the good of all; that, when he tried to do so, they pursued him, and called it wrong, and wicked, and smuggling."

"That's it, miss."

"I don't know; but he should not take Gerald—poor, dear Gerald! Heaven help him!"

There was a long streak of cloud, into which the rapidly rising moon now swept, a gloom came over the sea and the shore; and but dimly could be seen the Rift, as she scudded directly for the deep bay.

The scene that now took place, at a distance of not more than three quarters of a mile from the shore, was deeply interesting, and as seen by the scout and by Grace from the cliff-top, had a strange aspect of nearness, and yet disconnection with them, that imparted to it a curious and mysterious character.

Still tearing along through the water, with every inch of canvas she could carry, came the king's ship; and it was quite evident that she decreased the distance between her and the cutter at a rate that was very alarming to the latter.

But to the surprise of all on board the Spray, doubtless, it was evident that the R. was shortening sail—shortening sail just as she might have done had she been quietly beating in to some friendly port, with no enemy, intent upon her destruction, at her heels.

That a contest had taken place between the two little vessels was evident from the condition of some of the top-bamper of the schooner, and a white jagged streak, that looked splinter-like, on the side of the Rift, seemed to indicate that a shot, or more, had struck her; still this shortening sail—what could it mean?

We shall see.

Bang! bang! went the two stern guns of the schooner, and the dense smoke then broke over the king's ship, and for a few moments wrapped it up in that cloud of its own creating. Then what the cutter meant to do seemed to be apparent.

To fight!

A wild ringing cheer came over the water; it arose from the crew of the Spray, who for fourteen weary months had done nothing but chase, cruise, and lose, the Rift. It was a special duty of the Spray to capture, sink, blow to atoms, and burn the Rift, and now they had her—now, now!

"Hurrah, hurrah!"

How that ringing cheer came upon the night wind; how it echoed from the bold face of the old cliffs, and surged back again to the sea.

"Hurrah, hurrah!"

And no sound made the Rift.

Shot after shot from the Spray tore over the surface of the bay; and Grace on that cliff top swooned in dismay, as she seemed to see each of those deadly missiles winging through the dear heart of her Gerald, whom she loved so well—her own dear brother, who was all the world to her.

"They will kill him—oh, they are killing him now! Gerald—Gerald—Gerald!"

She sunk down close to the face of the cliff, and wrung her hands in agony.

"Hush, Miss Grace! Hush! Look again. Spikes and bolts! it is a close brush to-night."

The crew of the Spray cheered and fired at the Rift for some ten minutes, and the cutter still sailed on, taking no sort of notice. Right into the center of the bay, shortening sail still as she went, one by one, the canvas wings fluttered for a moment, and then collapsed and were furled—still her headway was great, and she was right before the wind. The Spray was hidden in the smoke from her own guns, but a couple of boats were manning and arming from her quarters to take possession of the Rift.

Then with sharp, precise reports, the Rift's small guns opened fire. Dense smoke fell into the face of the wind, and was thrown back again over the cutter, and still through it could be seen the bright flash of her guns, as they were served with rapidity. There was all the appearance of a fight, and Lieutenant Royle, of the Spray, roared and swore, and stamped on his quarter-deck, for the boats to put off and board the Rift.

"She has ceased firing, sir," said the gunner of the Spray.

"Has she struck?"

"Can't see, sir, for the smoke."

"Cease firing."

Bang! went the last gun on board the Spray, even as the order came from the speaking-trumpet of the lieutenant; and then an awful silence seemed to succeed to the sharp reports, and the smoke from both of the vessels gradually began to curl up and dissipate.

As the wind set, the vapor caused by the

firing from the king's ship rolled over in huge masses toward the cliffs and the Rift, while that in which the smuggling cutter had enveloped itself hung about it, and occupied very much of the space lying between it and the shore, as there was scarcely any escape for it in that direction.

All this produced an obscurity in the bay almost as great as what had been the case some hours before, when the mist was on the waters before the rising of the moon.

But this was a state of things which did not last long.

The smoke from the cannonade rolled up the faces of the cliffs and toppled over, and was whirled away by the breeze inland. Sea, and beach, and cliff shone clearly out in the silvery light, and there was the Spray beating off and on in the offing. There were her two boats in the middle of the bay.

But where was the Rift?

Gone! utterly gone, and left not a vestige behind—vanished. There were the white, tall cliffs; there the high tide that roared and lashed their bases; there the headland; there the bay so landlocked, and there the surging sea. But the Rift?

Gone! gone!

CHAPTER II.

OUT AT SEA—THE FOUR VESSELS.

It was early dawn on the morning of that same day, the evening of which had seemed to be about to close so disastrously for the smuggling cutter Rift, that, looking like a seabird in the wintry mist that hung upon the water, she slowly fought her way against almost a headwind within a few miles of the French coast.

"Keep her easy!" roared Captain Dolan, as he suddenly emerged from his cabin, with an inflamed countenance and every appearance of having indulged in early potations. "Keep her easy! Who is at the wheel? Is it headway or leeway that the lubber is making? Where's the Coquette?"

"Why, I take it," growled Ben Bowline, the mate of the cutter—"I take it that she is rounding the headland, thereaway."

"Ah!"

Captain Dolan sprang onto the carriage of one of the two guns that the Rift when out at sea got up from her hold, and prepared for service. He took a long look in the direction of the French coast, and ran his eye from bay to headland, and along the narrow, bright bit of sand that marked a portion of it, and then, pausing in his search, he said:

"I see her. As lubberly as usual—yawing about like a dead whale. Keep off a point, Martin. That will do. Let her come out with her cargo. I won't hug the shore for any Frenchman that lives."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The course of the Rift was slightly altered a point to the north, and the light canvas she carried strained more easily to the wind.

Captain Dolan looked from one to the other of his crew with a scowling brow, and then, waving his hand imperatively, he cried:

"All aft here! All aft!"

The smugglers emerged from all parts of the cutter, and gathered in a disorderly throng a little aft of midship, when Dolan, in a hoarse, harsh voice, addressed them:

"It's share and share alike, shipmates, in all our ventures, except two for the captain and one for the Rift. It's share and share alike in all danger; but I know there are some of you who think, because I said this should be the last year of the Rift with me as her owner and captain, that I meant to play you false; and, like Old Morgan of the Wisp, that you have all heard of, sell cutter and crew to the Philistines, as the last good speculation of captain and owner."

A growling kind of murmur passed among the crew, which it would have been difficult to take for either assent or dissent with any certainty. Captain Dolan paid no heed to it, but proceeded:

"But," he roared, "but I am going to prove to you all that I can't and won't betray you, for I, being among you—as one of you am as guilty as any or all, with liberty and life at stake as well as any of you—and my own son, Gerald. To smuggle is one thing—to fire on a king's ship is another; one is fine and imprisonment—the other is death!"

A look of deepening interest came over the faces of the crew, and the man at the wheel leaned heavily on the iron spokes as he bent forward to catch all that passed.

"You hear that, all of you," added Dolan, in a high, cracked voice. "My own son—my own boy, Gerald—sixteen years of age. Ha! ha! ha! You see, I laugh. My own flesh and blood—I don't mean to say that his mother would be pleased; but his father is. What you all stand committed to, so stands he, too. He is my hostage. Do you trust me now?"

The crew looked in each other's faces, and then one was about to speak, when, with a rush up the companionway, from the chief cabin, there came a youth whose singular beauty and intelligent aspect were in striking contrast to the

gloomy and morose faces of the major portion of the crew of the cutter.

"No, no!" said the youth, "I will not. I deny it. I heard you, Captain Dolan. You speak loud, but not truly. I am no hostage of yours. I will not be what you would make me. By force I am here, a prisoner—not a pirate."

"Pirate!" cried Dolan—"you hear, all of you?"

A groan of anger burst from the crowd.

"He calls you pirates! Away with him! And you, Martin, is this your care of your own particular charge?"

"I locked him in the aft cabin."

"And I broke my way out," added the boy, as he held up a short handled hatchet that had hitherto escaped observation. "I heard you, and I made my way here to deny your words, and to defy your power. I will not be a pirate; I will not be a smuggler. I cannot, and I will not, father! Father! I call you by that name now, which has not passed my lips for many a day. I call you father now, and I beg of you not to care for me—not to take any heed of me; but I ask you to desert me; to send me where you will, so that you let me leave this vessel, its bad, bad pursuits! Father, father! have some pity on me!"

The boy, with tears gushing from his eyes, flung himself on his knees at the feet of Dolan, who regarded him with an expression that even the most brutal of the crew shrunk from.

"Wretch!" he said, "is this your duty to your own father, who has—ha! ha!—who has brought you up so tenderly—ha! ha!—and who would yet make a man of you—and such a man, too, as your father. Back! back! I say; imp of evil. Avoid my vengeance! Back, I say!"

"Father, father!"

"Not a word. Why do I not kill you? Since when have you thought proper to call me father! I thought, by some freak of hate, you had left that off."

"I did leave it off when you struck Grace, and she left it off. We agreed—"

"Oh you agreed, did you? Rank mutiny."

"You struck the dear child; and the blood was upon her sweet face. I saw you, and from that moment—"

"Well? and from that moment?"

"I will not say it. You do not love either of us. Let us both go, and we will seek our own bread, if it be from door to door; and in the time to come, father, we will yet pray for you and we will try not to think harshly of you. It may be that we shall not be able to love you, but we will never forget—never—never, that we are your children. But you know that Grace is so young and so gentle; and you know that we love each other very, very dearly. It may be, father, that you think and believe that you are acting kindly by me in bringing me here. But oh! think otherwise! I will be no burden to you, nor will Grace. Let us both go—let us both go hand in hand into the world together. Heaven will look down upon us, and keep us. We will yet try to love you, father—father!"

Dolan clinched his hands till the pressure of his own nails was painful, and forced an involuntary cry from his lips. His eyes seemed to congest, and become bloodshot and baleful as the boy spoke. Then, without a word of warning or of angry preparation, he raised his foot and with the heavy heel struck the boy upon the breast as he knelt at his feet and sent him, stunned and reeling, some feet across the deck.

"Kill! kill!" yelled Dolan. "Why do I not kill you?"

It was but for a moment that the boy lay helpless and panting beneath the savage assault that had been made upon him. Pale then, and with his dark hair dashed by the light breeze across his brow, while his eyes, so usually expressive of affection and confiding tenderness, flashed with a new light, he sprang to his feet and confronted Dolan and his crew.

The very voice of the boy was altered strangely, and it seemed as though in that minute that had passed, he had stepped across the boundary line that separates childhood from daring youth.

Even Dolan shrunk back a step, and plunged his hand into his vest, as though he there had some concealed weapon, the necessity for which might at the next moment arise.

"Dolan!" said Gerald; and the clear, high-pitched voice of the boy rung through the ship. "Dolan, henceforward, between you and me there is neither affection, peace, nor amity. The tie of nature, if such there be between us, you have, before Heaven, broken. I defy you! You may kill me, but still I defy you! I will not aid you in your crimes. I will denounce you and them, when and where I can. Dolan, never again shall the word father pass my lips in allusion to you. I have but one father now—Grace has but one father. It is 'Our Father' which is in heaven."

These last words were uttered with such a gentle sweetness, and the eyes of the boy, regaining all their tenderness and affection, glanced with such ineffable love and confidence heavenward, that the pirate crew shrunk back and cast down their looks, and the ruffian Martin muttered to himself:

"I would not harm a hair of his head for a thousand pounds!"

Then Dolan recovered from the choking rage into which the bold defiance of the boy had thrown him, and he made a rush toward him, as he shouted:

"Then here's an end! An end at once!"

There could be no doubt but that the object of the ruffian captain was to do the lad some deadly injury, but with the quickness of thought Gerald passed him, and sprang upon the carronade that Dolan himself had mounted in order to make his observations of sea and air, and then poising the light hatchet in his hand Gerald cried:

"Come on, then, Dolan! Life for life—death for death!"

The howl of rage that burst from the lips of Dolan seemed scarcely human, as he seized an iron band-spike, and raising it above his head with both hands, was about to make a rush on the boy with it.

But the pirate crew, as if by one impulse flung themselves in a mass between Dolan and the boy, and Ben Bowline, in his deepest tones, called out:

"No! no! We are bad ones. We are smugglers—we may be something worse—but while there is a plank of the Rift between wind and water, and while I can set my foot on that plank, you don't harm the boy, Captain Dolan."

Another cry and another struggle on the part of Dolan was in vain. Ben Bowline wrenched the iron bar from him, half dislocating his wrist in the process, and flung it to the deck.

"No, you don't harm him. What say you, mates, is it to be as I say, or not?"

"Ay! ay!" cried every voice.

Captain Dolan staggered back till he came to the grating of the companionway, on which he sunk with a groan of rage and despair.

"My own flesh and blood to turn against me," he whined; "my own son, and my own crew, then, to take his part against me; oh, dear! oh, dear! what will the world come to? Come to your father, Gerald!"

The boy put on a look of proud disgust.

"I don't want to hurt you."

The boy shook his head, and kept a firm hold of the hatchet, for he saw a hyena-like look glancing out of the eyes of Dolan.

"Oh! then you won't," shouted the pirate captain, as he sprang to his feet. "Now look you, men. I will tell you what I have not told you yet. This boy—"

"A sail ahead!" sung out one of the men who was speedily on the lookout.

"Ah! What is she?"

"French! That's it. The Coquette."

"Ay, the Coquette," cried Captain Dolan. "Take the boy below."

Gerald looked at the crew, and hesitated.

"We have that to do," added Captain Dolan, "that don't want witnesses. But if you all like to have a witness that may hang you all, when he likes, why, have him, and let the boy stay."

"You had better go below, Mr. Gerald," said Old Martin. "The captain is the captain, and when he says go below, why, it's only right to do it."

"I will go," said Gerald.

Still with the hatchet, to which he clung with a tenacity that sufficiently showed he looked upon it as a most needful defense, Gerald stepped across the deck, and slowly descended backward down the companionway, to the cabin.

Then Ben Bowline spoke to Dolan in his growling, bear-like fashion:

"Captain Dolan, you had better let the boy alone; one volunteer, you know, is worth a dozen pressed men, and I don't know that a pressed boy is worth anything at all. Ain't that it, Martin?"

"Ay! ay!"

"Well, well," growled Dolan. "Don't bother about it; only it's hard times that a man mightn't do as he likes with his own flesh and blood. Keep her off a bit!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"You know, my men, that this is to be our last voyage hereaway, if so be as we are successful in what we agreed to do."

The crew murmured an assent.

"You see the Coquette, there? Well, you know that she trades with us, bringing us French goods and money both, for which we give her English goods and money. Now, this time, she comes with an extra cargo, and with a good round sum for English goods she expects of us. Well, as this part of the coast is getting a good deal too hot to hold us, and as I know, for certain, the admiral of the station, Sir Thomas Clifford, has got down here a schooner, well armed and manned, on purpose to lay out for us, and to follow us into shallow water, why, I propose that we be off after this voyage to another coast, up by the North Sea, where, from the Dutch ports, a good trade can be done."

The crew assented by various expressions of satisfaction, while the steersman baffled the French lugger, the Coquette, which evidently wished to come to close quarters with the Rift.

"Now," added Dolan, "what I propose is, to take the Coquette, and all in her."

"That'll do," said Ben Bowline.

"Clear her out."

"Ay, ay!"

"And then scuttle her."

There was a pause of irresolution among the crew of the Rift, and Dolan hastily added:

"They or us! They or us! If one is left to tell the tale, it will be told, and a *chasse-maree* will go across to Falmouth, with a flag of truce, and the admiral of the station will know all about us."

"It's an ugly trick," said Ben Bowline.

"But they are only Frenchmen," remarked one of the crew.

"There's something in that," said Martin.

"Are you all agreed?" cried Dolan.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Then you see it is just as well that Gerald should not be on deck," added Dolan, while the strange, malignant look flashed from his eyes.

By this time, the French lugger apparently had begun to suspect that the Rift, for some reason or another was dodging her, and she shortened sail and lay to, making only a little headway with the tide and surface-wind.

A brief order, then, that altered the trim of the Rift to a limited extent, and her course a point or two, brought her down rapidly toward the Coquette, and when within hailing distance, Captain Dolan sprung on one of the guns, and shouted:

"Coquette, ahoy! What cheer?"

A light, active, little old man leaped with agility on the bowsprit of the Coquette, and screamed out:

"Capitaine Doolan, vat for you—vat you call!—make one game at our Coquette! I was mooch mad!"

"Wind and currents," shouted Dolan. "All's right."

The lugger now slowly drifted alongside the Rift, which had lain to within a couple of hundred yards of the Frenchman.

These two vessels, long engaged in smuggling transactions, were adapted in every way for the rapid interchange of cargoes. Slowly they were allowed to drift broadside to each other, and then, by apparatus which was produced on both vessels, they were locked together, so that they heaved and rolled in the tide as one.

The little French captain leaped onto the deck of the Rift, and lifted his cap with great grace to Captain Dolan, and then to the mate, Ben Bowline, and then to the crew, and each time that he did so, he gave an amiable grin.

"Well, Captain Mocquet," said Dolan, "will you step below?"

"Oui, Capitaine Doolan, oui, I s'all step below; but I s'all, if you s'all please, capitaine, bring goods."

"All's right!"

The French captain, then, with great volubility, gave some orders to the five men that made up the whole crew of the Coquette, and they commenced transferring to the deck of the Rift various barrels and packages, not one of which was of sufficient size or weight to exceed the power of a single man to lift and deal with.

The object of this was, that, should it become necessary so to do, the smuggled goods might be easily flung into the sea.

The French captain then descended with Dolan to the cabin of the Rift, where the first person his eyes fell upon was Gerald, who was close to one of the small ports, with the hatchet still grasped in his right hand.

"My son," said Dolan, gruffly.

The French captain lifted his cap, and gave the usual amiable grin. Gerald bowed, with a sad look upon his face.

"Le petit monsieur is not—what you say?—good—well—eh?"

"Not very well," said Dolan.

A whispered conference then took place between Dolan and the French captain, which seemed to have reference to a sum of ten thousand francs, and to some cases of English cutlery and marine chronometers, and nautical instruments, but the particulars of which Gerald did not catch.

Then they went upon deck, the French captain not forgetting as he left the cabin, to bestow upon Gerald the inevitable grin again and the lift of the cap.

One of the crew of the Coquette appeared then on the deck of the Rift with a square box, around which some canvas was carefully sewn. Then Captain Dolan took the Frenchman by the cuff of the coat, and on the pretense that he had something to say to him, he led him close to the skylight that looked down upon the swinging table in the cabin. The skylight was half off, and left a considerable space by the side of it.

"My dear Mocquet!" said Dolan.

The Frenchman looked curiously at Dolan's face, with his head on one side.

"My dear Monsieur Mocquet, you must know—"

"Eh?"

"That there you go; for you are not wanted here."

As he spoke, Dolan clutched the French captain by the collar and his waist, and with one effort plunged him down the portion of the skylight of the cabin which was open. He fell with a crash on the cabin-table beneath.

"Batten down!" shouted Dolan; then, in a voice that rung through both vessels—"down with them! Quick—quick! That will do! Ha! ha!"

The five Frenchmen were seized by as many Englishmen and dashed headlong down the fore-castle-hatch of the lugger, on which they immediately placed its foul-weather covering, which they fastened in a moment.

The Coquette was taken, and rode side by side with the Rift, at the mercy of Dolan and his crew.

"A strange sail to the north-west!" sung out Martin, who was sweeping the sea with a glass.

"What is she?"

"Don't know, sir. She looks foreign."

"Not likely that; but be quick! Follow me, my men. You six, I mean, who are carpenters. Follow me with your tools."

"Ay, ay, sir!" cried the six of the crew of the Rift, who had been previously spoken to by Captain Dolan, and whose duty now was to scuttle the Coquette, while he repaired to Captain Mocquet's cabin, in order to see if any valuables could be found there.

At first he could see nothing that was at all likely to excite his cupidity, although he glared about him with the most eager eyes. Then he forced open the drawer of a locker, and was gratified to find a watch and some few articles of jewelry.

Then he tried another drawer of the locker, and found that it was a deep one, that held sequins, and other matters, apparently medicines.

"That will do," he said. "Good-by to the Coquette soon, and a good riddance, too, for I do believe that Captain Mocquet, by dint of prying about and questioning some of my men, had half found out our great secret of the entrance to the cavern by the foreland thereaway; and in that case, I would take his life, or the life of any man who is dangerous."

"A sail westward!" shouted a voice on board the Rift.

"Another!" growled Captain Dolan, as he still lingered in the cabin of the Coquette, loth to lose any article of value that he could carry away with him. "I wonder if these candlesticks are silver?"

"Hand over hand, sir, this way. A schooner with the king's ensign at the fore," cried a voice from the Rift, speaking apparently in answer to some questions that had been put by Ben Bowline, probably.

"Hillo!" cried Dolan, from the door of the Coquette's cabin—"are you ready? Have you done it?"

A strange rushing sound came upon his ears, and he could almost fancy that the lugger shook beneath him as the sea rushed into her.

"All's done, captain," said one of the men.

"When will she go?"

"Not for ten minutes good yet, sir."

"That will do."

"The Frenchmen are praying, sir, to be let loose."

"Let them pray."

Once more Captain Dolan turned to the cabin of the Coquette, and cursed his eyes slowly around it, to be certain that he had escaped nothing, when he almost uttered a shout of surprise and fright, to see a portion of the paneling of the wall suddenly slide aside, and the most charming of faces appeared at the opening—while, in the silvery accents of childhood, a young girl, of not more than twelve years of age, said:

"Bon jour, mon cher pere. Ou sommes-nous?"

Captain Dolan stood aghast—while, with a look of unmitigated surprise, into which fear was each instant growing, the young French girl fixed her beautiful eyes upon his face. The Coquette rocked a little from side to side, and the waters gurgled and rushed into her hold.

"She's going by the board, sir!" cried one of the crew of the Rift. "Tumble up, sir! She's going!"

CHAPTER III.

A FATHER AND DAUGHTER—GERALD'S HEROISM.

So thoroughly surprised was Captain Dolan to find that there was any one on board the Coquette but the French captain and her crew, that although warned—as we have heard that he was—of the sinking state of the lugger, he was for a few moments transfixed and incapable of action.

But the utter selfishness of the nature of Dolan was not likely to keep him for many moments inactive, when personal peril to himself was at hand. He recovered his faculties with a shout of fear, and flew toward the companion-way, only pausing for one half instant to cry out:

"Who are you? Who are you?"

The girl made some reply which he did not understand, and as he fled to the deck, he just saw her glide out of the little berth in which she had been sleeping.

"Let her go! Let her go with the rest!" he said hoarsely. "I did not place her there. He should not have brought her. This is men's business, and he should not have brought her! Let her go! let her go!"

There was a faint scream from the cabin, and then the Coquette visibly settled in the water.

Captain Dolan made but one leap onto the deck of the Rift, and then he shouted:

"Let go! Let go! she is going down! Keep all clear fore and aft, there."

The fastenings that had held the two vessels together were hastily removed, and the Coquette slowly surged away from the Rift.

Then it was that Ben Bowline stepped up to Captain Dolan, and said, in a low voice:

"Sir, I don't like the look of things."

"What things?"

"The craft thereaway."

"Ah!"

So absorbed had been Dolan in his interest in the fate of the Coquette that he had forgotten the two announcements that had been made of sails at hand; but now he turned his gaze in the direction indicated by Ben Bowline; and about three miles in the (fing he saw a small vessel, yacht-built and rigged, evidently bearing down upon him; while, at about the same distance from that again, but in a slant line, which brought it within five miles of the Rift, was a schooner, with St. George's ensign flying.

"I know her!" cried Captain Dolan.

"Which, sir?"

"The schooner. It's the Spray. She is sent after us by Sir Thomas Clifford. I told you of her."

"And the other?"

"Oh! a mere yacht."

"She has no colors, sir."

"Of course not."

"Ah, yes! Look, sir, look! I begin to think that—"

"What—what?"

Slowly and gracefully as the yacht-like vessel altered her point of sailing a little, a flag unfurled itself, and shaking its folds out to the breeze, presented the stars and stripes of the Great Republic.

"American!" cried Dolan.

"No doubt of that, sir; and a clipper. Look how she cuts her way, with scarce a ripple in her wake!"

"What's that?"

Boom came the report of a gun from the schooner. And, as if the elements had only awaited that as a signal, a dense fog came whirling from the French coast, and in a few minutes began to encircle the Rift in its misty embraces, in such a manner that it was quite clear, if it did not soon dissipate, her captain and crew would not be able to see from stem to stern.

Boom came another report, and Captain Dolan cried out:

"How is it! That's a big gun for a schooner!"

"Special service, sir," said Martin. "Lord bless you, captain! I was once aboard of one that was rigged out for special service, and they took a couple of twenty-fours with them, and blazed away like a good one."

"What special service?"

"After a pirate."

"Indeed? Ha! Well, my men, the example has been followed: for I happen to know that the schooner, Spray, is on special service, and that special service is to hunt down the Rift."

A suppressed exclamation burst from the smuggler crew, and then Dolan cried out:

"Is she gone—the Coquette?"

"There she goes, sir!"

Through the thickening mist, just faintly visible, as though it had been miles away, could be seen the low-lying hull and light spars of the French lugger—spectral-like she gloomed through the fog, and what of her could be seen appeared to sway about as though she were in the grasp of a tempest, while, in reality, the little soft breeze that had been stirring was almost entirely quenched by the mist.

A shriek—one shriek—uttered in tones that Captain Dolan felt he recognized, came upon the light wind, and he felt his heart grow cold.

"The girl in the cabin," he said. "It was not safe to save her—not safe. I could not! Will she cry again?"

A rushing noise now took place, and no longer was to be seen the shadowy form of the French lugger. Captain Dolan drew a long breath. The girl had not uttered another cry, and he was saved the terror of its remembrance.

But the one was enough!

He—even he—that man steeped in iniquity and sin; that man, whose hands were the red ones of a murderer, could not forget the gentle looks of those childlike eyes, and the soft cadences of the sweet voice, as she spoke the few words, the meaning of which was unknown to him. He passed his hand over his brow, and a cold perspiration settled upon his face, and he shook in every limb.

"She's gone, sir," said Ben Bowline.

"Gone! gone! I know she is gone. Why did she move the panel? Why did she look at me? Why did she speak to me? Gone! gone!"

"The lugger, sir, I mean."

"En?"

Dolan started as if from a dream, and then in a voice of rage, he said:

"I know she has gone! Don't speak to me—and be hanged to you all! I know she has gone! Keep her off there; we drift in—I am sure of it; the fog thickens."

"Ay, ay, sir, it does!" said Martin. "And it won't clear away till midday, I should say."

"Cutter ahoy!" shouted a voice, evidently through a speaking-trumpet, at this moment, although through the dense masses of white mist there could not now be seen anything of the American yacht or the king's schooner—"cutter ahoy!"

"Hoy!" shouted Captain Dolan in reply.

"Who hails?"

"His majesty's schooner, Spray."

"I thought so."

"No impertinence. Who are you? Strike your bell, that we may know where you are."

"Haven't got one! Down your helm, Martin. That's it. She'll send a shot into us if she can."

"Cutter ahoy!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Who are you?"

"The Mary Jane—South Shields—red herrines and pickaxes!"

Bang! went a gun from the Spray; but as the Rift had altered its course, the shot flew harmlessly past her, and it was only for one fleeting moment, by the flash of the discharge, that the position of the Spray could be seen through the fog.

"Thank you," said Dolan. "Now I know where you are, I can get out of your way. North by two points east, Martin."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The light canvas which had been set on board the Rift fluttered for a moment in the breeze, and flipped itself into action with the change of position of the little vessel which then, at an accelerated pace, fought its way through the rising sea.

Again the Spray fired a gun in the supposed direction of the Rift; but like a spirit, it had flown off into the mist, and the bright flash of the piece of ordnance only for a brief moment lit up the spars of the government schooner.

Brief, though, as was that illumination through the mist, it showed to the officers on board the Spray the yacht-like vessel, from which floated the stars and stripes.

Not above a cable's length to windward, the yacht was making a long tack to sea, as if it had become aware of its rather dangerous proximity to the French coast.

Then from the Spray a voice hailed the yacht, and the sound came hoarsely through the fog:

"What ship? Ahoy!"

"Who are you?" shouted a voice from the yacht.

"His majesty's schooner, Spray."

The reply was prompt:

"Yacht Nautilus—United States of America—Captain Morton, owner, and in command!"

"How did you get here?"

"Keel downward!"

"Hold!" cried a clear, sedate voice, of quite a different description to that which had up to this moment hailed and answered the hail of the government schooner—"hold, Mr. Dainty. I will see to this. What information is requested by his majesty's schooner Spray, that I, Captain Morton, of the Nautilus yacht, can give?"

"How came you here?"

"We have made the voyage from New Bedford."

"In that boat?"

"Yes."

"Good luck to you, sir, and a safe return."

"Thank you!"

"We are looking for a smuggler. If you see a vessel cutter-rigged, with a yellow streak just above water—"

"No, sir; I shall see no such vessel, cutter-rigged, or otherwise!" said Captain Morton. "I am not about to elect myself a supplementary custom-house officer for his Britannic majesty! Good-day, sir."

"Ahoy! Yacht ahoy!"

The Nautilus sped on her course, and the officer on board the Spray laid down his trumpet, as he said:

"Confound the fellow's coolness! That's the way with these American officers; they have always got some answer to you so pat and ready, that one can't think of what to say till after they have sailed off."

"Can you think now, Mr. Green?" growled Simon Royle, the old sailing-master of the Spray, and who in reality commanded the schooner.

"Well, s-a-h! Oh, of course! If he had only wished, I should have said to him—a—well—I should certainly have said something very sharp!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Mr. Green gave himself a congratulatory nod, as he descended to the cabin, muttering as he went:

"I only wish that the Rift, or whatever may be the name of the smuggling vessel, would founder, or that somebody else would take her in hand!"

In the cabin of the Spray, a young man was negligently lounging on a couch, with the stem of a meerschaum between his lips, and a Turkish smoking cap on his head, while a pair of red morocco slippers hung half on his feet.

"Now, really," he said, as Mr. Green, the acting lieutenant appeared—"now, really Green, did you ever lead such a life? Confound everything! Ah! what is it all about now?"

"Well, sir! it is annoying."

"Annoying!" said the Honorable Charles Minto Grey, who was in command of the Spray. "Annoying, do you call it, Green? It's a good deal worse than that. What is the use of having a great uncle at the Admiralty, if one has to go on deuced expeditions like this? What is the use? Now, there's that man of mine, Simmon. He can't make coffee; he don't know anything—the brute! You can sit down, Green. And there's that Moselle! It was delicate, but the sea air—the sea air—"

The rapid discharge of a couple of guns above, on the deck of the Spray, put an effectual stop to whatever else the Honorable Charles intended to say; and then the voice of Mr. Royle was heard, in almost shrieking vehemence, shouting:

"Cutter ahoy! Heave to, or I'll sink you! Who, and what are you?"

"The Rift, smuggler and pirate!" roared a voice in answer.

The Honorable Charles Minto Grey stepped from the sofa on to the floor of his cabin, and Mr. Green ran to the hatchway.

Then there was a sharp, ringing report, and crash through the oval light of the cabin of the Spray there came a six-pound shot, which passed over the head of the honorable captain, and smashed a mirror, in which he had been in the habit of admiring himself, on the opposite side of the cabin.

"Good-day!" shouted a voice. "We are going to Falmouth. Good-day!"

"Fire!" roared Mr. Royle; and there was a volley from the whole six guns which had been shipped on board the schooner for the special service she was on.

The smoke mingled with the fog, and for about five minutes enveloped the Spray in an impenetrable mist. When that in some measure cleared away, there was nothing visible, however faintly, through the vapory air, of the Rift.

"Make sail!" cried Mr. Royle. "If it's to be Falmouth, let us be after him. These rascals often speak the truth in bravado, thinking, when they name a port, that that will be the last place to which you will follow them. Give her full way."

The Spray was a fast schooner, and but that she was a little overlaid with her metal, would have sailed well on a wind, such as she now took advantage of; but even as she was, she sped through the water at a respectable speed.

It is now time that we take a glance at affairs in the cabin of the Rift.

Captain Dolan, when he flung the French captain with so little ceremony through the half-open skylight, was not at all unmindful of the fact that Gerald was in the cabin; but situated as he was with the boy, he did not concern himself whether he heard a little more or a little less of the peculiar business of the Rift.

The French captain had been so completely taken by surprise, that he had not made the least effort of resistance, but fell on the table in the cabin as if it had been an act of his own. It was only for a few moments, however, that he was thus mentally stunned by the treachery of Captain Dolan.

Springing to his feet, with a shout of anger, he made a dash at the skylight, to regain the deck: but the wooden covering that was placed over it on the moment, by the crew of the Rift, baffled him; and then he dashed up the hatchway, but that was secured; so that Captain Mocquet was a veritable prisoner.

It was then that, after striking his breast several times in his despair, he observed by the light that came dubiously in from the little eye-like cabin window, that he was not alone.

Rather pale, with his hand resting on the side of the cabin table, stood poor Gerald.

Had Captain Mocquet—who was a foe to the revenue, both of France and England, but by no means anything else, but one of the kindest-hearted and noblest men breathing—been in his ordinarily observant and cool condition, he must have seen, at a glance, that Gerald could be in no way concerned, except as a sufferer, with Dolan and his crew. But Captain Mocquet was thrown off his balance by the treacherous act of which he had been the victim; and there was despair at his heart; for fortune, life, and what to him was more than either or both, was now at stake.

"Voleur! what you say, villain, pirate? One life, one life!"

He drew from the breast of his apparel a small pistol, and Gerald felt the cold muzzle

of the weapon touch his forehead, while Captain Mocquet glared fiercely at him. The smile with which Gerald regarded him was so sweet, and yet so full of sadness, that the arm of the French captain slowly dropped, as he said, faintly:

"Et vous?"

Gerald shook his head.

"Ah! vous ne parlez pas Français. I shall speak English. You too—you too—you are one prisoner!"

"I am."

Captain Mocquet immediately embraced Gerald; and then a voice from the deck of the Rift cried out:

"Don't be too quick over it, mates—she'll soon fill and go down!"

For a moment the French captain seemed to be trying those words in different ways, to see if he could extract any other meaning from them than that which seemed obviously upon their surface. Then, with a shriek of agony, he flew upon the hatchway, and beat with his clinched hands upon the wooden covering.

"Non—non—no! Pitié—what you say—mercy! My Marie—mercy! Oh, non, non! What you call to give all, all, pour ma Marie! Mercy, mercy!"

Not the remotest attention was paid to the shrieks and prayers of Captain Mocquet, who then, with hands bleeding, and such a look of despair and agony upon his face that it was awful to see it, half-fell, half-staggered back into the cabin, and flinging himself on the floor, he placed the pistol to his head:

"Adieu, adieu! ma belle France! Adieu, ma cher belle! ma belle, mon ange! Adieu, adieu!"

"Stop, sir!" said Gerald, as he snatched the pistol from Captain Mocquet's hands. "What would you do, sir? Don't you know that the good God would be displeased with you?"

"Le bon Dieu!"

"Yes, I know that much French. You are a man, sir, and should not be cast down to kill yourself, because Dolan and the crew of the Rift are thieves and bad men."

"No, no. But you don't know; vous shall know my child (I cannot speak *de Anglaise* well), my child, my Marie. She will kill on board one Coquette. Oh, you shall know. She is *si belle*, so beautiful, she sleep so unsuspect *comme un ange*, and she and de wild sea roll, roll over one head of my dear little child. Mercy! mercy! No mother, no mother, no father to say live, and I will die for you, my Marie."

With tears, and sobs, and frantic cries, Captain Mocquet then explained to Gerald that his little daughter was on board the Coquette, and would be drowned in the vessel on its being sunk by Dolan and his crew, as it seemed to be their manifest intention to do.

"Good heaven!" cried Gerald. "They do not, they cannot know it!"

He rushed up the hatchway, and knocked as loudly as he could against it, to attract attention; and then with a voice that should have been heard even above all the bustle upon the decks of the two vessels, incidental to the transfer from the Coquette to the Rift of every portable article, which any of the crew of the latter took a fancy to, he shouted:

"Martin! Martin! Ben Bowline! Hoy! On board the Coquette is Captain Mocquet's little daughter—a child, a child. Martin! Martin! you don't want to murder the little child. Do you hear me? Save her! save her! Martin and Ben Bowline! Help! he pl! help!"

He beat furiously against the hatchway-covering; but with as much effect might he have appealed to the raging sea to give up its dead—for not the remotest attention was paid to him.

Weak, and faint, and exhausted, then Gerald staggered back to the cabin.

"It is all in vain!—it is all in vain!"

The French captain flung himself upon his knees, and with tears streaming down his face, began to pray.

"All on board, clear away!" shouted the voice of Captain Dolan. "She is sinking—clear away! fore and aft there; keep all clear!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" shouted the crew.

Then Captain Mocquet uttered a scream, and fell upon his face.

Gerald felt as if his own heart had paused in its action at that moment; and he was then alarmed by the French captain suddenly springing to his feet, and making a rush at the little oval opening that served as a window to the cabin. It was fastened by a screw, and the wash of the sea each moment splashed upon the piece of thick, greenish glass that was let into the little frame.

It was evident that Captain Mocquet was seized with a desire to get out of the Rift by that opening; and it was equally evident that it was by far too small for any such purpose.

Then there came a cry upon the air, and there was a commotion on the surface of the water.

The cry was the voice of Marie Mocquet. That commotion on the sea was the sinking of the Coquette.

Then a thought came over Gerald, and while

his eyes flashed with a new light, that made him look something more than mortal, he cried:

"Who shall say?—God! who shall say? It may be the will of Heaven, sir, that your child should yet be saved, and that I—even I, may be chosen as its instrument. You cannot pass through the window, but I can. I swim well; let me go!"

It was but imperfectly that Captain Mocquet comprehended all that Gerald said, but he understood enough of it to be aware that he meant to make some effort to save his daughter; and he held him to his heart for one moment.

"Go, go—go!" he sobbed. "Go!"

Lithe and active, slim and tall for his age, Gerald found no difficulty in projecting his feet through the window, and he at once glided into the sea.

It had been the favorite pastime of Gerald, from the earliest years he could remember himself as an inmate of the house of Captain Dolan, among the rocks and the cliffs, to play in the sea, as though it had been his native element, and he was fully and thoroughly at home in the water.

The smuggling vessel was making at that moment but slow progress through the water.

"Here, here!" whispered Captain Mocquet, and the light splash of a rope in the water, close to him, let Gerald know what he meant. The boy coiled it once round him, and so was able to keep up with the Rift. While gently beating the water with his feet, he gazed as well as he could through the fog over the surface of the sea.

"Lost, lost!" he said. "The Frenchman's child has gone down with the Coquette!"

Even as he spoke, a something glided past him on the top of a wave—half on the top of it, and half below it—rolling over and over, and looking like anything but a human form, amid the fog and the light ocean spray that was about it.

Gerald was impressed with an idea that it was some little child he was to look for; but this did not come up to that notion; and when, upon dashing the salt ooze from his eyes, he felt confident that it was a human form that was rapidly floating away from him, he did not think it was the fair girl who had spoken those few words we have recorded, to the villain Dolan, and who was the life and hope of poor Captain Mocquet's heart.

But still, that the object in the water was human he now felt assured; so Gerald, after loosening the rope that was coiled around his waist, struck out for it.

With vigorous strokes, he swam after the floating white object in the water; and as he went with the same current that carried it, and swam likewise, he soon overtook it; and flinging one arm around it, he strove to raise the face of the young girl from the waves, in order that, if the lungs had not yet ceased to play, they might inhale fresh life from the free air.

She did not move.

"Dead!" gasped Gerald—"dead!"

He then looked for the Rift.

It was at that time that Captain Dolan had ordered the first change in the course of the vessel, and that change had the effect of bringing it each succeeding moment nearer and nearer to Gerald, who found no difficulty in keeping his place in the water.

It was with a strange sort of rush that he heard, rather than saw, through the fog the Rift coming down upon him, and, in fact, it was with no little difficulty that he kept clear of her cutwater; and she rushed along past him at what looked like great speed—as he was floating at an angle in the other direction.

It was the Providence of the moment that the trailing rope, that he had released himself from, passed over his face and hands, and that he was able to grasp it with the hand that was disengaged. To wrap it by a movement of that hand several times round his wrist was the work of an instant, and then Gerald felt himself and his fair charge dragged through the water in the wake of the Rift.

Then came the challenge of the Spray, and the guns that were fired at the Rift, and the next alteration in the turn of the smuggler's wheel while it was in progress—brief as that period was—brought her to; and it was in that brief moment that Gerald was able to reach the little cabin window, and, in a suppressed voice, to call upon the French captain:

"Sir, sir! Help me! Oh, help me!"

Captain Mocquet uttered a wild, bewildered cry, as he flew to the cabin-window; it was a cry that was no doubt well heard upon the deck of the Rift; but, fortunately, he had uttered so many, that no attention was paid to it, and the fog continued to be so thick, that unless one of the crew had looked carefully over the side of the cutter, what was there passing at its little cabin window could not be observed.

Captain Mocquet saw him.

"Dieu! Dieu! Dieu!" was all he said.

"Pull in," said Gerald.

"My child?"

"No—I think not."

"Yes, yes! Oh, Dieu! yes!"

"For Heaven's sake, pull in! Now take her!"

Captain Mocquet pulled at the rope, and Gerald was raised out of the water with Marie on his left arm. The French captain caught her by the head, and then by one arm, and the small, delicate form easily passed through the aperture into the cabin.

Captain Mocquet was not then unmindful of Gerald; he only paused to strain to his heart once the body, as it seemed, of his daughter, and then, with his eyes bloodshot, and perfectly dry and hot now—for his grief was too great for tears—he helped Gerald into the cabin, and flung his arms about him, and kissed him tenderly. But he did not speak.

"Tell me," said Gerald, "is this your—"

"Hush, my Marie sleep. She shall sleep one long sleep! Marie! Marie! Marie!"

He knelt by her, and rested the fair head upon his knees, and bowed his head over her, and shook as with a strong convulsion; but he did not weep.

"Let us try to recover her," said Gerald.

"I have seen many who have been apparently drowned on the coast, where I have lived so long. She may not be dead."

Captain Mocquet looked up at him, and the grief in that look Gerald felt that he should never forget. But without another word, he went to the locker of the cabin, and with the blade of the hatchet he wrenched a drawer open; for it was locked; and there he found what he knew was there ready—a case of bottles containing various spirits and cordials—which Dolan kept for his own special consumption.

It was more by signs now than by words that Gerald intimated to Captain Mocquet that he meant to make an attempt at the restoration of Marie from her state of apparent death.

The father pressed his hand for a moment, and kissed him on the cheek, and then let him do as he pleased.

Gerald raised the head of the young girl on his arm, and gently chafed the neck and throat, and then he placed on the pale lips some of the ardent spirits from one of the liquor bottles.

After several minutes of rapid work, during which he did everything in his power to restore respiration, Gerald was startled by a sigh! Yes, it was a sigh. There is a faint movement too, of the young limbs—a shudder—the fair face turns gently aside; another shudder—she surely moves! She is in the arms of one who loves her. She lives—she lives! God of heaven, she lives!

And now the fountain of her father's tears is unsealed again, and he sobs like a child, and a deep sleep comes over Marie.

"She had better sleep," said Gerald, softly. "She will be quite well when she awakes. God be thanked for all this!"

Captain Mocquet sat upon the floor of the little cabin of the Rift, and Gerald placed Marie in his arms, and he nursed her gently, rocking to and fro, while his tears fell softly upon her. And Gerald then went into the little berth that opened from the cabin, and brought some of the bed-clothes that were there and helped to wrap them about her; and Captain Mocquet looked up at him, and smiled.

What was ship, cargo, francs—what was all to him—compared with that young life that had been rescued from the wild sea?

CHAPTER IV.

THE NAUTILUS IN PORT—A MYSTERY.

WHILE these events were taking place off the coast of France, the Nautilus, with its American flag fluttering to the breeze, was beating up the Channel, making for the port of Falmouth, and carefully feeling its way through the fog which hung over the coast near France, and extended for many a mile over the sea.

The day was considerably advanced when the Nautilus left the Lizard Point on its larboard, and beat up the road to Falmouth.

Then it was that Captain Morton, her owner and commander, came from his cabin; and looking paler and more anxious than any of his crew had ever seen him, placed a glass to his eye, and took a long survey of the coast-line before him.

"Dare I hope?" he said, sadly—"dare I hope? No—no—it is scarcely possible; and yet how strange it is that there should ever be a something at my heart which seems to whisper consolation to me, and that there may yet be in store for me a happiness that I shrink from contemplating, lest the bitterness of disappointment should be more than I can bear."

Those were young days for the stars and stripes of the United States to flutter to an English breeze, in English waters; and the shrouds of the guard-ship in Falmouth Roads were crowded, to look at the Nautilus as she glided lightly on her way.

Then there was a proud look on the fine face of Captain Morton, as he saw an officer on board the English frigate lift his cap, and he returned the salute courteously.

"Mr. Andrews," he said, to his sailing-captain, "this is the first time that I have been in an English roadstead. What can we do in the way of a salute?"

"Everything, sir. Seven guns will be handsome. We have four; and by the time the fourth gun does its work, the others will be loaded and ready."

"Do it then."

Another few moments, and the Nautilus was enveloped in a cloud of its own smoke, and seven smart reports from the little carronades had awakened the echoes of Falmouth Roads.

The captain in command of the guard-ship looked with a smile at his first lieutenant, as he said:

"That's well done."

"Very well, sir."

"Return it, then—only I think we can make a little more noise."

The lieutenant smiled, too; and then there was a shrill whistle on board the guard-ship, and a hoarsely-shouted command, and seven of her great guns boomed in thunder over the sea.

The Nautilus sped then toward the shore, and was soon in Falmouth harbor. The little boat of the yacht landed Captain Morton at some stone steps, down which a gentleman, whose hair was as white as snow, was slowly descending. This gentleman and Captain Morton met on these slippery stone steps with the green weed clinging to them; one side of the steps was open to the sea, and the other protected by the wall of that portion of the harbor. Captain Morton, with a courteous gesture, went seaward; and then the gentleman with the white hair lifted his hat, and smiled sadly, as he said:

"I thank you, sir; but I am tolerably used to these steps."

"I am a perfect stranger to them," replied Captain Morton; "but—but—"

"Ah! I see what you would say. Youth and strength can laugh at difficulties and dangers that appail age and decrepitude; but it is the suffering of the soul, sir, that has blanched these locks, not age."

As he spoke, the gentleman with the white hair drew himself up erect; and Captain Morton saw that there was a latent fire in his eye, and an expression of resolution, as well as of suffering, that deeply interested him.

He, too, had suffered, and there had passed over his heart one of those storms of grief that leave their impress forever on the outward man.

An eight-oared galley at this moment reached the foot of the stone steps, and by the respectful manner in which the oars were held aloft, and the whole turn of the affair, Captain Morton could see that the white-haired gentleman was somebody of importance.

They passed each other courteously, and then the captain of the Nautilus heard the white-haired gentleman say:

"Mr. Havocks, what was the salute about?"

"An American yacht, sir, saluted the guard-ship, and it was returned."

"Quite right—quite right."

"And that, sir, is—"

The last words were lost to Captain Morton, but by what followed, he guessed that they alluded to him, for the white-haired gentleman turned upon the lowermost of the stone steps, and cried out:

"Sir, will you pardon me for calling you back, but I am told you are owner and commander of the pretty little yacht yonder, which so courteously saluted our flag. May I hope for the favor and the honor of your company to dinner with me, at six o'clock?"

"With pleasure, sir."

"And I address—"

"Captain Morton, United States Navy. I have the honor to speak to—"

"Sir Thomas Clifford, Admiral of the Station."

A bow from each, and the two gentlemen departed; and then the sad look came back to the face of Captain Morton, and the gloom of settled grief crept again over the fine features of Sir Thomas Clifford.

One of the seamen who had rowed Captain Morton on shore, now lingered for orders, and the captain turning to him, said:

"You will go seaward after making an inquiry for a little bay called St. Just's, and then you will put in and look out for me, as in all probabilities I shall make it by land, and you will see me on the coast."

The American captain then took his solitary way into the town.

It was getting late in the day, and he had not much time to spare between then and the hour of his appointment with Admiral Sir Thomas Clifford; but still, he thought he would be able to make the inquiry that he came to make; and taking from his pocket a scrap of an old newspaper, the well-worn condition of which showed that it had been frequently consulted, he slowly read its contents:

"POSSIBLY INTERESTING.—An uneasy sensation has been created in our town by the death of a woman named Cole, who has resided for a considerable time in the neighborhood, close by the sea, and whose whole mode of life was mysterious and secret. With no ostensible means of livelihood, she was never known to do any work, or to solicit charity, but yet has resided for more than ten years in a cottage, for which she paid a regular rent most punctually as the day came round. On her death-bed this woman accused herself of being, with a man named Hutchins, instrumental in the wreck of an

American bark, named the Sarah Ann, and she died in a sad state of mental prostration. It was impossible, from the incoherent character of her ravings, to make out what exactly she meant, but much of her self-accusations seemed to relate to a Mrs. Morton, and a child named Jessica, or Jessie. Our worthy coroner did not think that an inquest on the remains of this self-accusing creature was required."

Such was the newspaper paragraph which the captain read to himself, in a low, earnest tone.

Alas! how often he had read it to himself in that same low, earnest tone.

"This," he said, with a deep sigh, "this from the Falmouth paper, after all these weary years of grief, the only faint light that Heaven has vouchsafed should fall upon my benighted heart in relation to this subject."

He sighed deeply.

The piece of newspaper was then carefully folded up, and replaced in his pocket; and he stood in one of the narrow, ill-paved streets of Falmouth, wondering in what precise direction he should commence his inquiries in relation to the statement which had appeared in the paper.

"Heaven direct me!" he said.

His fingers still clutched the little piece of newspaper, on which was chronicled the name of one so dear to him; and as he strolled on, he reached the termination of the street; and the evening deepening in its gloom, he felt the cool rush of sea-air, and found that he was at the upper portion of a narrow, tortuous thoroughfare that led down to the beach.

It was by an instinct, rather than by any reflection, that Captain Morton strolled slowly down this narrow, dim-looking route to the sea.

CHAPTER V.

THE FLIGHT TO FALMOUTH—THE PERILS IN THE CABIN OF THE RIFT.

RETURN we to the Rift, which was battling its way through the surging sea with the Spray, striving in vain through the fog to trace its progress or its presence.

Captain Dolan had had by far too much experience of Channel weather, not to be perfectly sure that the mist in which he was now enveloped was a land one, and that it would not extend many miles out into the Channel.

His object, then, was to get so far ahead of the Spray, before emerging from the fog, that she would not be able to overhaul him; or by some one or other of those tricks by which he had before succeeded in deceiving and eluding the vigilance of government cruisers to make good his escape.

Little did he imagine how strange a scene was taking place in his own cabin.

Dolan whispered his orders to Ben Bowline and Martin, and they at once set about the carrying them out.

They were very curious in their results.

The long, thin, yellow streak that was just below the bulwarks of the cutter was slowly peeled off, and proved to be nothing but a piece of painted leather, which could be glued on at pleasure, and at pleasure removed. Beneath that the Rift was all of a color, namely, black.

They next brought up from below some long pieces of painted and covered railing, which were quickly fixed aft on the bulwarks about the stern, so as to give that portion of the cutter quite a novel appearance.

Then a general shift of the ballast took place, which altogether altered the trim of the vessel, and changed the rake of the masts. A couple of fresh sails were bent, one of which was of a peculiar bluish color; and take it for all in all, nothing could very well look so dissimilar to the Rift, as it was about half an hour before, as the Rift at the then present time.

Every one of the crew made some change in his attire, and Captain Dolan put on a white neckcloth, that he took from his pocket, and a black frock coat that was brought to him from the fore-castle.

A piece of painted canvas was fastened just below the stern railings, on which was painted: "The Susan, Plymouth."

"That will do," said Dolan. "Keep all clear, and we shall soon be out of the fog."

"Ay, ay, captain!" said Ben Bowline. "And if any one is sharp enough to know the Rift in her present trim, why, all I can say is, that he almost deserves to have her."

"I think she will do. Ah! that is sudden."

The ship sailed out of the fog as suddenly and quietly as if it had passed from air to water; and although the light of that dim and wintry season was neither strong nor bright, yet the sense of change to actual daylight was very marked and strong.

The Rift with a surging dip went on its way; for it was crossing in a chopping fashion that washing, heaving sea which set across its course.

Not a sail was to be seen.

"We are alone as yet," said Captain Dolan, "thanks to the fog. Keep an eye south'ard, Martin."

"Ay, sir. We shall have her soon."

"The Spray?"

"Yes, sir. But she won't know us, and we

shall be asked, mayhap, if we have seen the Rift. I should heave to, sir, if she gives the order."

"We will—we will. Keep her as she is, while I go down below."

There was one of those awful sinister-looking glares about the eyes of Dolan, as he uttered these words, which generally preluded the wicked thought or the wicked act of the man.

The old seaman saw it.

"Captain Dolan!" he said.

There was a something so new and strange about the tone in which the old man spoke, that Dolan started and looked anxiously at him.

"What is it, Martin?"

"I don't know, Captain Dolan, what you may be thinking of; but if I was you, sir, I wouldn't hurt so much as a hair of the head of Captain Mocquet."

"Ah!"

"No, sir. I'd land him. There is enough on all our minds already. Not a soul of the crew but is full of the glooms about the crew of the Coquette, for fear they shouldn't get well on shore."

"Well on shore?"

"Ay, captain."

"Why—why—what? Are you mad?"

"Not quite, Captain Dolan. Not quite; but we couldn't stand it, sir; and while you was down below in the Coquette looking for plunder, we got up her crew, and started 'em off in their own boat, and told 'em not to say a word for their lives' sake—and away they went."

Captain Dolan bit his lip ferociously.

"Then they were not drowned in the Coquette. They did not go down with her."

"Not a bit, captain. We are smugglers—we do a bit of piracy, too; but Lord bless you, we are tender-hearted. So you see, captain, we don't want any harm to come to old Mocquet."

"Now, by all that's—"

"Hold, captain. Heave to a bit. Hilloa, mates! What say you now; do you want Captain Mocquet to be sent to old Jones's locker before his time, or don't you?"

The smuggler crew gathered together, and Ben Bowline, in his deep, growling voice, said:

"No, Dolan, no. We won't have it! We don't mind stealing the revenue—we don't mind a little sea-piracy, in the way of helping ourselves to a few stores and so on, but we don't like the look of murder."

Dolan's countenance turned a shade blacker, as he made a desperate effort to control his passion and to get up a smile—which, when he did contort his face into it, had a most diabolical look about it. It was with an affectation, then, of wonderful good-fellowship that he cried out:

"Well, well, my lads, all's right. We sail together and we smuggle together, so we ought to hold together in such little matters as you mention."

"Ay, ay, captain," added Ben, "and we don't, you see, want to hang together."

"Ha! ha! Of course not. That's all right and slip-shape. I won't do old Mocquet any harm, only I happen to have a few words to say to him. That's all—quite friendly, you know—quite friendly. Trust me. All's right—all's right."

Captain Dolan paused while the hatchway-top was removed, and then he plunged down toward his cabin.

Before Captain Dolan reaches that cabin, we will take a glance at our three friends who are there, and at the posture of affairs as regards the father and daughter and the gallant Gerald.

Marie slept calmly and composedly for more than an hour, during which Captain Mocquet did not stir hand or foot; but when she moved a little and opened her eyes, it was with a sad smile upon her face that she said:

"Ah, I dreamt of home!—of dear home, and the vines. I dreamt of home!"

Captain Mocquet folded his arms about her, and held her to his heart; and Gerald got as far away as possible—for he heard that Mocquet was whispering rapidly to her, and he saw that she started several times, and that her eyes were slowly beginning to be turned toward him.

That the French captain was relating to his daughter the history of her danger, and of the manner in which she had been saved from death, Gerald could not doubt; and a bright flush came to his cheek, as he felt conscious how the grateful heart of her father would praise and speak of his share of the transaction.

Then the whispering ceased, and Marie struggled to her feet. It was then quite pleasant to see how Mocquet arranged about her the coverlet that Gerald had brought from the berth in the cabin, and how picturesque, and like some little savage queen of some fair island of the Southern Sea, she looked with such drapery about her.

"And then, with pretty, stately walk, she went up to Gerald; and for a moment he forgot everything; for the soft arms of the young girl were about him, and her tresses were upon his cheek.

Then Marie looked him in the face, and while the little hands were clasped around him, she

spoke to him; and the words came out so torrent-like, and with such alarming volubility, that Gerald, being perfectly innocent of the French language, looked both distressed and confounded.

Captain Mocquet then told Marie that Gerald did not speak French, upon which Marie made a disastrous attempt to say something in English, which was so total a failure, that Gerald was unaware of what extraordinary language she was cognizant, as well as of her native tongue.

"I shall go to tell him," said Captain Mocquet.

"Mon cher Gerald, we will love you away—all the days—and you will go to *la belle France*, and be one *bon mari* to *ma chère Marie*!"

"Out," said Marie, immediately.

"That is what you call arrange—settler," added Captain Mocquet.

"Oui!" cried Marie. And she settled herself down on the cabin floor, and held Gerald's hands in hers, and rested her head upon his knee.

Gerald was in a state of confusion and indecision as to what he ought to say or do, when a sudden noise above attracted his attention, as well as that of Captain Mocquet and his daughter.

That noise was the removal of the hatchway covering, by order of Captain Dolan, that he might come down and say what he had to say to Captain Mocquet.

That Dolan should see Marie, and that he should have in his power such a hostage for the submission both of herself and Captain Mocquet, to whatever he might choose in the plenitude of his tyranny to dictate, was a thing not to be thought of by Gerald, if it could be avoided; and he sprung to his feet, lifting Marie tenderly at the same time.

"Hide, hide! oh, hide!" he whispered. "That if Dolan who is coming!"

"My Marie! My Marie!" cried Captain Mocquet.

"Hush! The berth! He will not go in there. Hush! Tell her to go there, sir. She will not understand me; oh, tell her!"

Marie looked from one to the other confusedly, but a few words from her father let her comprehend what was meant, and she at once glided past the little sliding-panel, which shut in what was called the state-berth on board the Rift.

Gerald pushed a chair close to the panel, and then, keeping the hatchet close to him, while Captain Mocquet, pale and nervous, stood by the table, they both awaited the entrance of the villain Dolan.

But Dolan did not descend at once to the cabin. Before doing so, he beckoned to Martin; and while the baleful light was in his eyes again, he said:

"Martin, Martin, when you sent off the crew of the Coquette in their boat—"

"Well, captain?"

"You were not aware that, in the cabin, sleeping in one of the berths of the lugger, there was—there was—"

"Way, you don't mean to say, sir, that Mocquet had brought his little girl with him in this voyage?"

"Yes, and you can tell our shipmates that they left that daughter of Mocquet's in the cabin, to go down with the scuttled lugger."

"You left her!"

"The act of one, the act of all."

"No!"

"Yes; in law, my dear Martin, we are all in for that alike. You and Ben Bowline, and the rest of you, you see, have drowned Captain Mocquet's little daughter. Ah!"

Captain Dolan, after making this consoling speech, slowly descended into the cabin.

Martin passed his hand over his brow, and then gave a vigorous pull at his hair, as he said:

"I wonder, now, if that's proper sea law. I don't half like it. I'll go and speak to Ben about it."

Dolan took good care of himself as he went into his cabin, for he did not feel quite sure that an attack might not be made upon him, either by Gerald, or by Captain Mocquet, or by both; so he flung the door rather wide, and stepped in.

"Well, Captain Mocquet?" he said.

The French captain made no reply.

"Come—come—it is not worth while being sulky over it. Business is business, you know; and my idea was to make as much money as possible. I dare say you would have served me the same trick, now, if you could. It's only a matter of money, and you must be too well off to take much heed even of the loss of the Coquette and your francs and goods."

"Capitaine Dolan," said Mocquet, in a sharp, clear voice, "you are one robber—one villain! My Coquette was mine—my francs were mine. You had the Rift—that was yours. I did not touch yours—you have robbed mine."

"Come, come, be reasonable! I have let your crew go safely off in their boat."

"Ah!"

"But I want twenty thousand francs of you!"

"Ah!"

"On one condition; which is, that I restore to you your little daughter, whom I took out of your cabin, and have in perfect safety for you, whenever you choose to give me an order for the money in some way by which I can get it."

The cool effrontery of this speech, after what Mocquet and Gerald knew, was almost more than they could for the moment believe; and it was not until Dolan had repeated the words, that they fully appreciated them.

"And, captain," said Mocquet, who spoke better English now under the impulse of his strong emotions than he had done before; "and, captain, si, si—that is, if I shall not say ay to that proposition?"

Dolan shrugged his shoulders.

"I cannot take upon myself to say exactly what I will do, but you will never see your daughter again."

"Ah!"

"You consent?"

"Non—no!" cried Mocquet, as he dealt the table a blow that made it start again.

The baleful look glanced from the eyes of Dolan, and he muttered:

"Yes, you will; and I shall now leave you to consider it. Your money or your daughter—that is the question."

"Non—no!"

"Oh, yes, it is! Gerald, you will do well, as you may be some time with this obstinate man, to let him know that I am very apt to be a man of my word. The day will soon wear away, and I will come to you again. By-the-by, your present quarters will be changed, and I shall then trouble you to come on deck, for I shall want my cabin to myself, so see that you quickly decide, Captain Mocquet, for when on deck—when on deck, hal in a sudden passion, a moment of rage—and I am rather subject to them, if thwarted—I'll fling a man into the sea, where you will join your daughter as food for fishes!"

"But you said," remarked Gerald, "that you had saved the captain's daughter!"

"Eh?"

"You said you had her safely, and now you talk of her being food for fishes."

"And how dare you put your ear in?" roared Dolan, as he bent a ferocious gaze upon Gerald. "Look to yourself, boy—look to yourself!"

"I will."

"It is well that you should; for if I had not made up my mind to hang you, I should perhaps, drown you!—hal hal! Look to yourself. I have your daughter safe enough, Mocquet—a little pretty creature, with large, fine eyes. I have her! Her price is twenty thousand francs; and when you are prepared to pay them, she is yours. Think of it—I leave you to think of it."

"A sail!" shouted a voice from the deck.

Dolan hesitated a moment or two, as though he either had something to say himself in addition, or thought Gerald or Captain Mocquet would make him some reply; but as they neither of them did, he—with a muttered imprecation—made his way to the deck.

"What shall I do?" said Mocquet to Gerald. "What shall I do? He is one *grand voleur*, and he will go to come, and my Marie will be discovered."

"Hush! Oh, look!—look!"

Through the little cabin-window, by which Gerald had plunged into the sea to the rescue of Marie, they could see over the surface of the Channel, and at about two miles distant, there was the schooner *Spray* making all sail, in evident pursuit of the *Rift*.

"We shall be saved yet," said Gerald. "Oh, yes! we shall be saved yet. And then, and then—"

The boy clasped his hands over his eyes, and sobbed bitterly.

"*Ma foi!*" said Captain Mocquet. "What for you (what you call it) cry?"

"That man is my father."

"Non—no!"

"Yes! Oh, yes! I cannot deny him."

"I shall not believe. One father and one son shall not be as one north pole (as you call him) and one south pole is far away from the one and the other—I mean the difference. It was not to be in the nature. Oh, *non!* No, no—ten times no! Bah!"

Monsieur Mocquet had settled this so satisfactorily to himself, that he looked quite contented about it, and gazed through the cabin-window at the advancing *Spray* with great interest.

The schooner, on emerging from the fog, had come at once in sight of the *Rift*, but the alteration in the trim and general appearance of the cutter completely deceived the sailing-master of the *Spray*, who, in the *Rift*, now saw nothing but a strange cutter, from which he might possibly get some information concerning the smuggler.

It was no part of the design, now, of the *Rift* to try to outsail the *Spray* toward the English coast, as in such a case she ran all the risk in the world of being intercepted by some government vessel that might lie between her and the shore.

What Dolan now wanted was, to shake off the *Spray* by finesse, and by sending her on some false tack in fancied pursuit of the *Rift*.

When, therefore, the *Spray* got within about three-quarters of a mile of the *Rift* and fired a gun, the *Rift* at once lay to, and looked as quiet and submissive as possible.

Had then the sailing-master of the *Spray* not stood so much on the dignity of a king's ship, but had sent a boat on board the *Rift*, some sharper eyes than common might possibly have seen something suspicious about the *Rift*, but he did not do so.

When the smuggler lay to, the *Spray* soon dashed over two-thirds of the distance between them, and then Mr. Royle hailed through his trumpet:

"Cutter, ahoy!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"What cutter?"

"The *Sarah*—port of Plymouth."

"Come on board, sir."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Captain Dolan had had practice in this kind of thing; and having a certificate from the Trinity House that had belonged to Captain Thompson, and the regular papers of a cutter, *Sarah* of Plymouth, in readiness, he quickly got into the cutter's boat, and—Martin and Ben Bowline—on both of whom he knew he could depend, as regarded the discretion of their acts, pulled him over the short distance toward the schooner.

Dolan stepped onto the deck of the schooner, and touched his cap respectfully.

"Any orders, sir?"

"Well, I don't know as to that. Have you your papers?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hem! Ah, hem! Captain Barnabus Thompson of the port of Plymouth. I suppose it's all right—hem! Ah! the *Sarah*?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, have you seen a cutter—about your size—mast raking out of all custom, with a yellow streak beneath her bulwarks—and a very large foresail, that she oughtn't to have at all; in fact, she is rigged anyhow, but sails as if the Old 'Un hims'lf puffed her along?"

"Yes, sir. Such a cutter tried to overhaul us; but we got out of her way, or else she gave it up, and went off due west about an hour ago."

"Due west! We ought to see her."

"So you ought, sir; and there is a sail, right bull down, that looks like a gull's wing, on the water, that I should say was the very cutter."

"It may be. Thank you."

"You are welcome, sir. Can I be of any use—I am going into Falmouth?"

"No—yet stay a moment—you can report to Sir Thomas Clifford, the Port Admiral, that the *Spray* is off and on, looking out for the *Rift*, and hopes to bring her in soon."

"Yes, sir; I hope you may."

"Good-day, Mr. Thompson."

"Good-day, sir."

As cool, and calm, and collected, as it was possible for any human being to be, Dolan got over the side of the schooner and into his boat, and Martin and Bowline pushed off and dipped their oars into the water, with long, vigorous strokes. It was at this moment that Mr. Green strolled up from the state-cabin—where the Honorable Charles Minto Grey was, as usual, enjoying his merrischaum—and going to the side next the *Rift*, he said:

"What is this all about, Mr. Royle?"

"Only been trying to get some information from a stupid captain of a cutter yonder. The *Sarah*."

"The what?"

"The *Sarah*."

"But she is not the *Sarah*."

"Oh yes, sir. I saw her papers, and her name is on her stern. You will see, sir."

"Well, it looks to me like 'Rocket, South Shields'."

Mr. Royle took up his glass and looked, when to his eyes a very curious phenomenon, in regard to the name of the cutter, presented itself. There was a strip of something—wood or leather, he could not make out which—or it might be canvas, flapping about, just under the carved wood-work at the stern of the cutter; and as this something flapped in one direction, there was on one side of it the name "*Sarah*, Plymouth," and on the other, "*Rocket*, South Shields."

"What do you make of it?" said Mr. Green.

"I don't like it at all."

"It's odd."

"Very. Hilloa!"

"What now, Mr. Royle?"

"Some one is fluttering a handkerchief from her cabin window. Why, good gracious!"

"What now?"

"She is altering the rake of her mast, it seems to me, and setting more canvas. Unless I am a Dutchman, I should say that I can just see the corner of the muzzle of a gun on her deck, half hidden by some matting and a tarpaulin. I don't like the *Sarah* of Plymouth!"

"Nor I. What, if after all, she should turn out to be the *Rift*?"

"By the holy, sir, it may be! Cutter ahoy! Hilloa! Cutter ahoy! Hilloa! Come back, sir—you Captain Thompson—we want to speak to you."

Dolan had got more than two-thirds of the way to the cutter when this new hail came upon his ears, and he glanced back at the *Spray* as if irresolute in regard to what he should do. Both Martin and Ben Bowline saw that look of Dolan's, and the latter said at once:

"No—no. It won't do. There is something amiss."

"Surely not."

Martin ceased rowing for an instant, and gazed earnestly at the schooner. Then he said, quietly:

"Give way, Ben—give way. We are in for it now. Give way, or all is lost."

A shrill whistle from the deck of the government schooner came over the surface of the sea, and then there was a splash in the water, as her boat was afloat, and half a dozen of her crew sprung into it.

"Now, Ben," cried Martin—"pull with a will!"

The oars plashed in the water, and in a few seconds Dolan, and Ben Bowline, and Martin were on the deck of the *Rift*, and the boat properly secured. There was not much anxiety on the mind of Dolan; for well he knew that there was no schooner, cutter, or other vessel afloat in the Channel, that in a stern-chase would have the slightest chance of competing with the *Rift*.

"Now, work on!" he cried. "Show them a bit of our quality—for I don't like the looks of things on the deck of the *Spray* at all."

The boat that had been launched from the schooner had not got above a dozen of its own lengths from the *Spray*, when she was recalled, and the men rested, with a dissatisfied look, on their oars—for English sailors have a notion that they can board and take anything that swims.

"Look out!" shouted Martin. "Down with the helm! That will do. Here she comes."

A gun had been hastily prepared on board the *Spray*; and even as Martin spoke, the report followed the flash, and there was a sharp whistle of the shot passing close to the weather-bow of the *Rift*.

"Very good," said Martin. "That fellow now knows what he is about. That will do, I think."

This last observation of Martin's rose from his observation of a very peculiar-shaped sail, which had been—on the moment that speed became a prominent object in the proceedings of the *Rift*—bent to her cordage and mast. It was probable such a sail as cutter never carried before; but it had, or rather the secret of its shape and use—been bequeathed to Dolan by an old buccaneer, who had seen it used in the South Seas, and found how wonderfully effective it was, just on a wind.

The cutter made one dipping sort of motion, as though it had an intention, like a duck in diving, of gathering the sea over its decks, and then it flew, rather than sailed, on its course, north by west.

All further disguise was now useless, so far as the fact of the cutter finding it inconvenient to be overhauled by the government vessel—although those on board the schooner could, after all, only have a suspicion that it was the *Rift* they had in chase.

Mr. Royle looked fearfully savage at the recollection that he had actually had the captain of the cutter in his hands, and had let him go again.

But if a stern chase be a long chase, it is one, likewise, that keeps the game long in view. The cutter might sail five feet to the schooner's three, but that only took it at the rate of two feet from the schooner in the given period of time, and now the *Spray* was crowded with all the canvas that could be put upon her, until she was in such a situation that had she been in a more treacherous sea than the English Channel, where sudden squalls, typhoons or cyclones might abound, but little chance of safety would have been left her—as it was, she made good speed.

"It won't do, Mr. Green," said Royle, "it won't do. She'll get away."

"Cripple her. It is the only chance."

"We will try it. Double-charge the long carronade, you lubbers, and ram well home! We will hit her or burst, I take it. Clear away there! Now let me get to it."

Mr. Royle flung himself at length by the breech of the gun, and carefully sighted the chase. As the *Rift* rose and fell on the seas she was cutting her way through, he watched until the rise and fall of the *Spray* was coincident with that of the cutter; and then, rolling over from the position he had assumed, in sighting the gun, he cried:

"Fire!"

Bang! went the doubly-charged carronade; and a circle of light-blue smoke flew upward, hanging fantastically about the sails of the vessel. A gust of the rather fitful breeze that had got up within the last half-hour cleared the vapor from before the gun; and then Mr. Royle uttered a loud cheer of exultation.

"Hit—hit!" he cried. "She's hit! Ready, my lads, to give it him again!"

Mr. Green looked earnestly at the Rift through a glass; and that there was some confusion on her deck was sufficiently evident—for there lay a heap of white canvas, and she visibly altered her course a point or two to the north.

The fact was, that the shot from the Spray had done the only mischief the Rift had to dread; and that was, to bring down some of her gear. For the time, the new and extraordinary sail that had given such speed to the smuggling vessel had been rendered useless—it having been brought down by the run; and that was the white object that Mr. Green saw incumbering her deck.

The speed of the Rift was materially checked; and all was hope and excitement on board the Spray, that the cutter might, in fact, be the very vessel they were commissioned to destroy or capture, and that they were in a fair way of being alongside of her in the course of half an hour.

"Now, again!" shouted Mr. Royle.

And the cannonade was once more pointed and fired. But this time the luck was on the side of the Rift; for the ball flew harmlessly past her—clearly, in rather too close proximity to the man at the wheel to be pleasant to him; but, as Martin remarked: "A miss is as good as a mile—so that's all right."

But the damage was really very serious on board the Rift; and Ben Bowline looked Captain Dolan in the face as he said, in his usual unamiable manner:

"It's not much use now. The new jigamaree of a sail is done for; and though we can beat him in the plain sailing, he will sight us right in to shore."

Captain Dolan took a long look about him; and then, in a suppressed voice, he said:

"One hour more daylight."

"That's all, sir."

"Keep on, then, with all speed, for a few miles further," then he added in a loud voice:

"Aft here, men of the Rift—aft here, I say!"

That this portended some important communication to them, the crew well knew; and they gathered slowly about the main-hatchway.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHASE OF THE RIFT—GERALD'S DANGER.

THE baleful look was in and about the eyes of Dolan as he glanced from face to face of his crew, and in a low, deep voice, addressed them:

"I told you, my men, that the Spray you see yonder was commissioned to hunt us down; but I did not tell you why, exactly, and who gave the information that brought it into the narrow sea, nor do I mean to tell you now. If we can get clear away, I don't want to make ill-blood by telling you at all."

"Tell us at once," growled one of the crew.

"No, Jackson—no. But I cannot help saying that we are in danger. When she chases us a little further inshore—she will signal to cross us to every craft she sees; and then we shall have a foe in both ways."

"Ay, ay," growled Ben Bowline.

"So my opinion is," added Dolan, "that we ought to try and shake her off now, that we are in mid-channel."

The crew looked at each other dubiously.

"You know what I mean, all of you, as well as if I had said it. You all know that if we are taken without firing a shot the utmost that they can say of us is that we are smugglers; but if we so much as fire one shot against the king's ship—though it flew as wide of its mark as west from north—it's a yard-arm affair."

"What say you all?" added Dolan. "Would you rather be taken as smugglers than escape as—"

"Pirates!" cried Ben Bowline.

"Well, you may call it that, because such is the name they will give it. In the one case, you will all be put in prison for twelve months or so, and then be drafted on board a frigate. In the other, you will get off clear; and as this is to be the last venture in these waters, why, I am for risking all and making a fight of it. What say you? you want to lead free lives and merry ones?"

Captain Dolan only got thus far in his oration, when he was stopped by a ringing cheer from his men; and then a noisy determination to fight the schooner.

"Well," he said, "that's man-like. Now, mind you, I don't want a fight quarter to quarter—that's not the thing; but I do want to cripple the Spray."

"Ay, ay!" shouted the crew.

Captain Dolan had stated that the night was coming; but from the sudden darkness that now crept over the scene, it would appear that it had been much nearer at hand than he had assumed it to be.

The white sails of the Spray could be distinctly enough still seen—for she was not above three quarters of a mile astern of the Rift; and now the government vessel began to fire rockets in couples into the night air, which gave Dolan and the crew of the Rift a good deal of uneasiness—they had so much the char-

acter of signals to some force that might be inshore, and which might prove so very hazardous to the Rift.

Dolan now held a brief consultation with Martin and Ben Bowline; and then, in a loud, clear voice, he cried:

"Clear her out, 'Number Twelve,' clear her out, my men, and we'll give the Spray a little taste of our quality!"

"Number Twelve," as it was called, was a long gun that would carry a twelve-pound shot with great precision, and for a great distance.

It was with the grim looks of men who are facing a great danger, but have made up their minds to do so, that the crew of the Rift prepared to fight the Spray.

"Hand-over hand she comes!" said Martin.

"Let her come!" growled Ben Bowline. "Will Dolan fire the gun?"

"Yes—he or his master."

"Who's his master? What do you mean?"

Martin significantly pointed below; and then Dolan cried out loudly:

"Martin to the helm! Keep a bright lookout, and dodge the shot. There she goes it again."

Flash came a stream of light from the side of the schooner; and then, with a sharp clap, came the report of the gun, and the cutter heaved heavily in the sea as the shot again passed her in most dangerous proximity.

The crew had been busy with "Number Twelve," as the long cannonade was called, and its dark muzzle now pointed threateningly toward the Spray.

"All ready?" asked Dolan.

"Ay, ay, sir; all ready."

"Then, my men, I have something to tell you before the gun does, I hope, its work for us."

He sprung upon a portion of the gun-carriage as he spoke; and, in the singular night light that was about and upon him, Dolan looked perfectly fiend-like.

"You'll all think it something out of the way that the government should commission a schooner on purpose to hunt us down, but there is a reason for all things. We have been betrayed!"

There was a visible commotion among the crew.

"Yes, betrayed! But before I ask you to think of this—before I ask you to act upon it—and before I tell you who the traitor is—I have one request to make of you, one and all."

"What is it?" said Jackson.

"It is, that you will spare the life of the traitor—it is, that you will let him be to what punishment may overtake him for his treachery—it is, that you will make him, and him only, fire this gun; so that, come what may, he will be committed to the act."

A general shout of acquiescence to this proposition, or rather to these propositions, followed Dolan's speech; and then, waving his arms for silence, he added:

"Very well! We now understand each other, and I will read you a letter."

Bang! went another gun from the Spray, and a portion of the ornamental bulwark that had been placed at the stern of the Rift, by way of disguising her, was torn away—a splinter from it grazing the cheek of Dolan, and inflicting a slight wound, but still one from which the blood started, in a row of drops, like red rain.

"Only a touch," he said; "only a touch. It is part of the whole affair. You shall hear, shipmates—you shall hear, who it is that I have to thank for this."

There was a wild, unnatural, sneering tone in the latter portion of these words; and then, holding before his eyes the paper he had taken from his pocket, but evidently, at the same time, repeating the words he uttered, either from memory, or concealing them at the moment, he spoke as follows:

"To Sir Thomas Clifford, Port Admiral, Falmouth:—"

"SIR THOMAS:—If you wish to put an end, once and for all, to the worst gang of smugglers on this coast, you will look out for a cutter named the Rift. It is very crank built, and its mast rakes out of all custom. There is a secret about the manner in which it endangers itself that I will not disclose, as it might endanger the safety of one I wish to preserve; but if you choose to take the Rift in the open Channel, you may find her on the fifteenth of this month anywhere between Falmouth and the French coast. Keep my name a secret. I will call on you after you have captured the Rift."

"I beg to remain, Sir Thomas Clifford, your obedient servant,"

GERALD DOLAN."

A yell burst from the crew, and a half kind of rush was made for the cabin, where Gerald was known to be.

"Now," added Captain Dolan—as he pretended to pass the back of his hand over his eyes, as though he were very much affected by having thus to accuse his own son—"now you know all, and why I got the promise from you to spare his life. You know all now."

"Overboard with him! The Jonas! Kill him! Brain him! Fasten him to the gun, and send him off to the Spray!"

Such were the shouts that arose from the infuriated crew; but Dolan placed himself by the hatchway, as he said:

"No! no! he is my son still."

"Down with him to Davy Jones's locker!" shouted Jackson. "Only let us get at him!"

"No! no! You shall all of you keep your promise; and when we get back to the cavern in the cliff—which we shall get back to, if you are all true to me and true to yourselves—then we can think of what to do with him; but, at present, we will make him fire on the Spray, which his own letter has sent in pursuit of us, and which has brought this blood upon my cheek, and would blow us all out of the water, if it could."

"But, Captain Dolan," said Ben Bowline, with a puzzled look, "may I ask one thing?"

"Certainly, Ben."

"Well, captain, and you messmates! how comes it, if this here letter, willacious as it is, was sent to Admiral Sir Thomas Clifford, that our own skipper here, Captain Dolan, has got it?"

Dolan looked staggered for a moment; and one of the crew, as he put into his cheek an enormous extra lump of tobacco, said:

"My eye! but that Ben is a out-and-out sea-lawyer. I never thought of that now."

"How comes it that I have the letter addressed to Admiral Sir Thomas Clifford?" said Dolan.

"Ay, ay, sir; that's it."

"Why, it's a copy of it. It says at the top of it: 'A copy of a letter that I sent to Sir Thomas Clifford about the Rift.'"

A groan came from the crew.

"Does it?" said Ben.

"It does."

"It will settle the matter, Captain Dolan, if I reads that ere bit of it to the crew."

"Ay, ay, Ben, read it. Take it," said Dolan, as he stretched out his hand, and let go the paper before Ben could reach it; and the wind taking it, whirled it at once far away to sea, where no mortal eyes would ever look upon it again.

"Oh," said Ben, "that's unlucky."

"How provoking!" said Dolan. "I thought you had hold of it."

"Oh, dear, no!"

Dolan suspected that the "oh, dear, no!" was a contradiction to his statement of what he thought; but he affected to take it in its other sense—namely, that Ben had not got hold of the paper.

"Well," he said, "it can't be helped now. It's gone; but, just as I read it to you, my men, there it was, as this blood now trickling down my cheek can testify."

Now, the blood upon the cheek of Captain Dolan did not testify to anything of the sort; but there was the material blood, and the thing sounded like an argument, and to the illogical sailors it was received as such.

"Make him fire the gun," said Captain Dolan.

"He shall fire the gun!"

"He shall! he shall!" shouted the crew; and they made a rush toward the cabin where Gerald was a prisoner.

CHAPTER VII.

CAPTAIN MORTON MAKES A DISCOVERY—THE TWO FATHERS.

WE left Captain Morton, of the American yacht Nautilus, about to take his way down the narrow turning that led to the sea, near to the town of Falmouth.

It seemed to him as if, from the first moment that he had landed on the shores of England, he had been surrounded by mysterious influences which had directed his movements; and, with a feeling at his heart—the heart so burdened with sorrow—he believed, that yet before he closed his eyes that night in sleep, he should hear or discover something on the subject which now, for ten years past, had engaged all his waking and much of his sleeping thoughts.

The turning was very narrow, and on the little plateaux or slopes on either side of it, coarse shrubs and some of the wildest of wild flowers had grown.

The place was dark, in some portion of it, as a cavern; and it was not until Captain Morton actually came within sight of the sea, that he could persuade himself the narrow tortuous turning actually led to it and to the beach.

Captain Morton paid no attention whatever to the state of the weather. Once or twice he felt in his waistcoat pocket for the fragment of newspaper, that seemed to him to be the most precious object in his possession.

And now he has nearly reached the beach. A few wretched fishermen's huts are there, and one in particular, which is made entirely from about half a large boat set up on end on the middle, and patched up in front, so as to look like an eccentric house.

From the windows of this boat residence, or from what served as windows—being openings over which some oiled paper was pasted—there gleamed a faint, uncertain light; and Captain Morton thought that he heard some one reading or praying within the boat house.

The captain drew closer to the singular residence, and then he heard some one cry out:

"No—no—I tell you no! I never did that. They did it—oh, Heaven knows; for it used to

look down on us with its million eyes—the stars they are. Heaven knows that they did it, but I did not—I did not! Oh, have mercy! Oh, do have mercy!"

Captain Morton paused and listened.

"Let me die in peace—in peace! Go away!—go away! I tell you to go away, all of you—all of you!"

A succession of deep groans then came from some one apparently in great agony, and then all was still.

Captain Morton tapped at the door of the boat-house.

"No, no!" screamed the same voice that had before spoken. "No—no more—no more. Why do you come to me? I did not kill them; I saw it done; but I did not kill them! Go away! Go away!"

The captain tapped at the door again; but this time no notice was taken, and he felt for some mode of opening it; but there was none.

The shadow of some one passing close at hand, seemed for a moment to deepen the gloom of the spot, and Captain Morton called out aloud:

"Hilloa! Who goes there?"

A man in the garb of a fisherman lounged forward.

"Does your honor want a boat?"

"A boat?—no. Tell me who it is that resides here?"

"In the old boat, your honor?"

"Yes, yes."

"Oh, that's old Simms."

"But he is very ill; perhaps dying."

"Lord bless your honor—no. That's his way. We don't mind him. He has had a tap on the head, we all think, in some smuggling affair, and he don't seem to be quite right in his wits. He lives here; but nobody knows very well how—though they do say he gets kept by the runners."

"The who?"

"Oh, the lads that run a cargo now and then, without asking leave of the custom-house."

"Oh, the smugglers!"

"You may call them that, sir. And if a plain man may say a plain thing, I would just advise you, as you are a new one and a raw one, to keep a whole skin and go home; that's all I'd say to you!"

"A new one and a raw one? I don't understand you. I am captain and owner of the Nautilus, out yonder."

"What? that tidy little craft with the 'Merican flag?"

"The same."

"Then, I beg your pardon, sir. I thought you was a custom-house officer on the spy."

A startling yell at this moment from within the boat-house, testified to the fact that old Simms, as the fisherman called him, had by no means finished his alarms for the night.

"Can I get into his hovel?"

"Not a bit of it, your honor. He shuts himself up pretty safe, unless one chooses to break in, and that would be easy enough."

"So I should think," said Captain Morton, as he set his shoulder to the frail door, and with a crash it fell inward. "That will do."

Calmly and collectedly, to all outward appearance, Captain Morton entered the dwelling of old Simms; and by the light of a cotton wick, that just projected from the spout of an earthen pan of coarse fish-oil, he saw, lying on a miserable trundle-bed, an old man, whose bloodshot staring eyes were fixed on vacancy. He did not seem to have observed the entrance of Captain Morton, or to have noticed the breaking down of his door.

"Go away—go away—go away!" was what he kept on saying; and each time that he uttered the words, they seemed to increase in agony of expression.

Captain Morton advanced close to the bedside, and placed his hand on the wrist of the old man; saying, with a deep, solemn voice:

"Simms, I want to question you about St. Just's Bay."

The old man uttered a scream, and started up in his bed, and looked wildly at the captain.

"You—you—you are not—not—"

"Not what?"

"The—no, no—not like you! Oh, what a soul—what a soul! Hush, hush! Were you on board?"

"On board what?"

"The Sarah Ann."

"Ah! yes—no! Yes to the Sarah Ann, as being in regard to that vessel my message here; no, as to being on board of her. Oh, would I had—would I had!"

"Yes; would you had?"

"Tell me all you know of the Sarah Ann."

"Ha, ha! and kill my soul—and kill my soul!"

"It may be that your telling me—that your disburdening your heart to me—may lighten its load, but it cannot add to it."

The old man glared in the face of the captain, and shuddered as he said:

"Are you an angel?"

"No—I am a man, even as yourself. I do not know if, in truth, the hand of death is now

on you; but if it be, you will pass with a lighter soul into eternity, if you will reply to me truthfully, on a matter that deeply concerns my peace, and possibly yours hereafter."

"Yes," said the old man, "I know I am dying. I have been before sick, almost unto death; but I never knew that I was dying until now. I feel it here—here—here!"

He feebly struck his chest as he spoke; and then Captain Morton addressed him in a voice of deep feeling and emotion:

"With that conviction, then, upon your mind—with the idea that you will soon—perhaps—be in the presence of God, I conjure you to answer me truly that which I shall ask of you."

"Will you pray for me, then?"

"Yes. Listen: Ten years ago, there set sail from the port of New Bedford, in the United States of America, a ship named the Sarah Ann."

The old man groaned.

"She was bound for Lisbon; but from the time when she was spoken by a vessel in mid-Atlantic, she was never heard of."

"The Sarah Ann?"

"Yes."

"Go on—go on. Tell me more."

"On board of that ill-fated vessel was the joy of my heart. I had lost one who—"

Captain Morton rested his face upon his hands, and the struggle with deep emotions shook him to his heart's core. Then he spoke again quite calmly.

"I had lost one whom I loved in America: she was an English girl; and she left me with a little child, whose only friends resided at Lisbon. In the midst of my desolation, I thought that I would send the little one there."

"The Sarah Ann was my own ship. It was a fearful epidemic that had carried off the young mother, and I was anxious to get the child into new and fresh air. Therefore was it that, in charge of a kind and trusty nurse, I sent her before I could myself leave America. Affairs of all sorts debarred me, and the Sarah Ann started on the voyage it never completed. From that day to this, not a spar, not a vestige of the ship seems to have met human eyes."

The old man groaned.

"And now I want to read to you this paper which I have cut from a Falmouth newspaper; and something seems to tell me that you can give me the information I seek. Listen to me! Do you hear?"

"I do—I do."

Slowly and distinctly, and in a deep, measured voice, Captain Morton read the extract from the newspaper, which the reader is already in possession of. As word after word came slowly and solemnly from the lips of Captain Morton, it would almost seem, from the solemn stillness that reigned in the little boat-house, that the breath of life had, indeed, left the old man to whom he read it.

But such was not the fact. The attention of the dying man was so painfully excited, that all his cries, and all his groans were submerged in it; and he could only glare at Captain Morton, with an expression that had evidently a doubt in it of his mortality.

Then the captain paused, and, in a voice in which there was more emotion than he had allowed to be manifest while he was reading the extract from the paper, he said:

"If you know aught of this transaction—if you can throw any light upon these mysterious hints concerning the fate of the American vessel, Sarah Ann—I charge you now, as you will have to answer before the judgment-seat of Heaven for the acts done in this life, to speak!"

A strange hissing sound only came from the lips of the old man.

Captain Morton inclined his head close to him, to listen if he uttered articulate words.

"Water! water!" he gasped.

"Yes! yes!"

Captain Morton hastily glanced round the little boat-house, and found a small barrel in one corner with a wooden ladle, and found that it contained water. He brought it to the lips of the dying man, but with a querulous cry, he dashed it from him.

"Poison! poison! You would and ought to poison me; and with such poison, too, as may produce the slowest tortures. Leave me!—leave me, now! Let me die in peace!"

"You have not answered me."

"I will. I will speak now!"

"I listen."

"Ten years ago, it was February, here at Falmouth—that is near to here—at St. Just's Bay—the smugglers' cavern. The secret, you know, that has been for all that time so well kept—the secret—yes, the secret cavern. I will not tell you that; but the storm raged, and the false beacon was on the cliff-top—for Dolan was a wrecker as well as a smuggler."

"Yes—go on."

"The beacon slowly revolved, and it was so like the light at the Lizard, that fleets—whole navies—might have been lost in the blind security of their onward course. I lit it! It was my duty. I thought it my duty, and I lit

it. Oh, God—God! I hear the shrieks now!—now ringing through my brain!"

"What shrieks?"

"Hush—hush! There was a ship!—there was a ship! She was deep in the weltering trough of that wild sea, but yet she fought with the storm. I saw her—I saw her; and she made to the east, as the seeming Lizard light beckoned her to do. I saw her by the flashes of the broad lightning, and then by the blue light that she burnt on her capstan-top before she struck. Her main-top-sail yard adrift, sails in ribbons; her flapping sheets had torn the eye-bolts from her deck; her masts bending like straws and still she fought the storm, and neared the shore!"

"Go on—oh, go on!"

"Fluttering in the gale was the American flag; and still she drove on—on to the shore of rock and drift. She struck! I heard the cries of those who were mangled in the wreck—of those whose limbs were mashed up in the crashing, parting timbers; and then the wreckers went down to the beach."

"Were all lost?"

"All—all. You shall hear. All but one!"

"One?"

"Hush—oh, hush! I would not have those drowned souls bear us. Do you know that at times, when the wind howls, and the cruel sea beats far up upon the beach, and sends its spray dashing over this poor house, they come—they all come—with their pale, dead faces, and their swollen features, and strive to drive me to madness. Hush! The ship was a ship no more. There was not a spar or plank six feet in length, that held together so that you could say: this was part of a ship—except one mass which had some cordage hanging to it, and that is still in the cavern by the cliff, Dolan's cavern. You know that!"

"No—no!"

"You do—you do! Because spirits know all things. That portion of the ship held together, and drifted to the shore. It was the bit that had the name on it!"

"The ship's name?"

"Yes—yes! The ship's name!"

"And—and! Oh, go on! Tell me!—what was the name?"

"The Sarah Ann, New Bedford!"

Captain Morton uttered a cry; and then by a violent effort, recovered his composure sufficiently to say:

"Then I am to understand that the ship was lured to a lee-shore by a false beacon, and struck, and went to pieces at once!"

"Yes—yes. And as the poor weak, struggling wretches who reached the shore, crawled up through the misty froth of the sea, they were one by one struck down."

"Horrible!—oh, horrible!"

"Dolan did it—Dolan did it! Not a man of those who are now with him were then of the gang; excepting one Gasket—he is there still. You will not betray me!"

"I will not! Go on—go on!"

"In the morning when a faint gleam of sunlight fell upon the sea, we all cleared the beach of the wreck. It was piled up in different cottages and caverns; and before the warmth of the summer sun was felt, it had been all burnt. The bodies were all dragged high up and buried in the sand and shingle of the beach."

"But you spoke of one—of one who was saved!"

"I will tell you—I will tell you of that. My wife was alive then. I don't know how or why it was, that she clung to me in all my evil life, but she did—she did. We lived in one of the small huts up the beach—not a mile from this spot by water. Well as I told you, it was evening again after the wreck, and I had not had so much of the plunder as I wished, and so had struck her. And then I lay down in my hammock—for I had one slung for myself in the hut."

"I don't know how long I slept, when I started awake, and I heard my wife singing in a very low tone; and at times as she sung, I heard the whimpering, wailing cry of a little child. I had no child. I thought I was dreaming at first, and I listened again; and then I was sure it was not. There sat my wife—there was blood upon her cheek, where I had struck her; but there she sat—crouching down by the fire, with a little child on her lap. I was mad, I tell you. There was fury in my heart, and the hot liquor still held my brain. I raised a shout, and was about to spring upon her. But she answered that shout of mine with a scream of fear, and then she flung herself at my feet, and clasping the child to her breast, she spoke to me in a wild, screeching voice that was awful to hear."

"From the wreck!—from the wreck," she said. "I saved it, in the early dawn. It is a little child, Philip—a very little child. It lives, you see. Oh, spare it, spare it. No harm—it can do no harm to you. We are childless—no little eyes look up to you, or to me—no little lips part to utter the name of father or mother to us. I saved it from the wreck. There was a tangled heap of cords, and a basket, Philip, and I found the child. I thought it dead, but I have nursed it close to my heart,

and by the fire here; and it lives now. You will let it live, Philip, husband—you will spare this life."

"And you! And you?"

"I saw that she was madly bent upon the child, so I let her have her way, and the little girl—"

"The little girl?"

"Yes. She thrived, and lived, and grew, and my wife died. It was soon, then, that I fell and struck against the main-batch, and was half a cripple for life. Then, while I lay upon my hammock, Captain Dolan came to me—the fierce, bad man, came to me. I saw that there was danger in his look. I could scarcely speak to him."

"That is the captain of the gang of wreckers you mean, Dolan?"

"Yes! That is the man."

"Does he still live?"

"He does!—he does! It is upon what he calls his bounty that I, too, have lived. It is no longer wanted—it is no longer wanted."

"Go on, pray tell me all; and if you should by any chance recover from this attack of illness, you will have no necessity for again appealing to Captain Dolan. I will see to you."

"That will not be wanted. I know that I am dying—I know it too well."

"The child? Go on and tell me what became of the child?"

"She grew to be a pretty, gentle creature, with a thousand winning ways about her; and, as I told you, Captain Dolan came to me when I was lying almost at the point of death—and I did not want to die then. He asked me about the child, and I tried to make him believe that it was mine; but he had heard differently from the wives of some of the men, who had the secret from my wife; so he told me he knew all, and meant to take the little girl to himself—as he said that the day might come when she might be of good service to him, if he should want a friend. And then I said that she might, too, be of good service to me, if I wanted a friend—for then some inquiry might be made as to who she was, and I could take the credit of having saved her. And upon this he swore a terrible oath, saying that the only condition on which he would help me in my then condition, was that I should entirely give her up."

"And you did?"

"Not just then. I slightly threatened him, and told him that I had dangerous secrets; and then a peculiar look came from his eyes, and he said to me: 'Hutchins—'"

"Ah! Is your name Hutchins?"

"It is."

"Then you are the man mentioned in the ravings of the woman Cole, which are partially recorded in the scrap of newspaper I have read to you?"

"I am—I am. But that is not correct. I am not—I never was quite as bad as that would seem to make me. Oh! no—no—no!"

"Well—well?"

"The captain—that is, Dolan—thereupon told me how he only that moment spared my life because he had a tenderness for all who sailed under the black flag with him; but that he could get rid of me as easily as speak the words. And I felt and knew that, in so speaking, he spoke the truth; and so I let him have the child."

A choking kind of sensation seemed to come over Captain Morton for a few seconds, and he could not speak.

The dying man rolled restlessly to and fro on his humble bed, and groaned in agony of body and spirit, and the captain recovered sufficient composure to enable him to speak, and he said:

"Now, Hutchins, as you are on your death-bed—a fact of which you feel assured, as well as I do—I beg of you to tell me all, and to tell me the exact truth."

"I will—I will!"

"Where is that child now?"

"With Dolan, in the cavern."

"What cavern?"

"You know it well. It is not hidden from you—you who have eyes that mortals have not. Oh! you know it well—unless he has taken her to sea with him in the Rift."

"The Rift?"

"Yes, the pirate."

"I heard that name from some one on the shore, only a short time ago in connection with some supposed expedition of a king's vessel, called the Spray, which is in pursuit of it. Tell me if I am right. Is this man, whom you name Dolan, in command of the Rift?"

"He is—he is!"

"And he is the same who has the child?"

"Yes, Captain Dolan. Too late—too late! Hush—oh! hush!"

"What do you hear?"

"The service."

"What service?"

"The funeral service. I see the coffin on the grating, and the flag is over it. I hear the service being read: 'Dust to dust—ashes to ashes!' The name is Thomas Hutchins. I am dying. I am dying—oh! save me!—help me! I did let the little one live; and never, oh! never in my fiercest anger, did I raise a hand against her. I was kind to the child—I did let it live. Oh! spare me now."

A loud knocking at the door of the little boat-house, at this moment, startled both Captain Morton and the dying pirate.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHOT AND THE BLACK FLAG.

SOME portion of the strange and exciting dialogue that was taking place on the deck of the Rift could not fail to reach the ears of Gerald and of Captain Mocquet—although, probably, it was not very intelligible to the latter.

The shots from the Spray had been watched with painful anxiety by both Gerald and Captain Mocquet.

"I will not fire the gun," said Gerald, as he hastily descended to the cabin.

"What shall you go to do?" said Captain Mocquet.

"They want me to fire on the Spray."

Captain Mocquet put on an inquiring look, and evidently did not understand what Gerald meant.

"Quoi?"

"They want me to commit myself to them, and their evil life by firing at a king's ship; and I will not do it."

"Ah!—bah!—no!"

It was at this moment that the hatchway was opened, and a confused shouting of voices came upon the ears of Gerald, as some half-dozen of the crew descended to bring him up.

Gerald held forcibly by the cabin-table.

"Hilloa! hilloa there! You are a nice nut for the old 'un to crack," shouted Jackson. "Come up; tumble up, will you, you bad bargain? We want you to do a little job on deck, that's all. Only to fire a gun—that's all."

"It is false!" cried Gerald. "The letter is false. I did not write to the Port Admiral."

"Now there!" said Dolan—who had come half-way down the hatchway—"now there! Do you hear that, my men? He confesses it."

"I do not confess it, Dolan," said Gerald, "and you know you speak what is not true. I deny it! As Heaven hears me, I deny it!"

"Deny what?"

"That I wrote to the Port Admiral betraying the Rift and its crew."

"Now, look you here, my men," cried Dolan. "Out of his own mouth we condemn him. Has any of you told him that we accused him of that? Who has said a word about the Port Admiral, or the crew of the Rift, or the Rift?"

"Not any of us," said Jackson.

"And yet, you see, he knows all about it."

A groan of rage came from the crew.

"I heard it," said Gerald. "I listened on the inner side of the hatch and heard it."

"Oh, what a come-off!" cried Dolan. "No, no, that won't do, will it my men?"

"No, no!" was the cry. "Up with him! Up with him! Now, young gallows-bird, up with you!"

"Hold, what you call hard!" shouted Captain Mocquet, as he sprang forward and fought for the release of Gerald. "Hold, I will not that you shall go have him."

The lawless crew liked nothing better than this interference of the French captain, inasmuch as it gave one or two of them an opportunity of dealing to poor Mocquet some of those straightforward Anglo-Saxon blows, about the region of the stomach and head, which are always so utterly bewildering.

Captain Mocquet, in another moment, was to be seen sitting in a remote corner of the cabin, propped up against an angle of the wainscoting and looking very rueful indeed.

By main force Gerald was borne on to the deck of the Rift.

The only two of the men who had not taken an active part in this transaction were Ben Bowline and old Martin. To be sure the latter was at the wheel; but had he not been, there is no doubt that he would have kept his neutrality on the occasion.

Indeed, there was a stern look upon the face of the old sailor of disapprobation of the whole affair; and when his eye caught those of Ben Bowline, he gave a short nod and pointed to the wheel, which Ben understood to be an appeal to be relieved.

"You, Jack Gooding," cried Ben Bowline, "take your spell at the wheel!"

"Ay, ay!"

"Who gives that order?" shouted Captain Dolan, "while I am on the deck?"

"I do. I thought I was captain of the watches on the Rift. I thought I was first officer; but I don't want to be. I say I don't want to be; but while I am, I will do my duty. Part of that duty is to change the watches—part of that duty is to give the proper men spell and spell about at the wheel, and I will do it. I did give the order, Captain Dolan. And what then?"

This bold defiance seemed to search up the very life-blood of Dolan, and his face turned almost livid with rage. He plunged his hand into the breast of his apparel, to seek for the hidden weapons that he had there; and as he did so, he glared round upon the crew to see what chances of support he had, in case of coming to an open rupture with Ben Bowline, or in

case of asserting his supreme authority by taking his life.

But there was a look about the crew of the Rift that warned Dolan how little real power he had over a throng of men banded together for the purposes that made them companions. And he made a great effort, and swallowed his chagrin.

"My men," he said, "I know, and you all know, that we must have discipline; and I, for one, think that when I am actually on deck, all orders should come from me. So let Jack Gooding take his spell at the wheel."

This was a sort of compromise of the matter; but still, something more might have come out of the transaction, if an incident had not just then taken place which was of a much more absorbing character, and which fully occupied all the thoughts of the crew of the Rift.

The Spray had got on a breeze that very much favored its capabilities in sailing; and as the Rift had not been making any extraordinary exertions to increase the distance between them, the Spray had succeeded in lessening that distance sufficiently to be able to use her guns with more precision than before.

There was a sharp report, a bright flash, and a puff of white smoke, all mingled together, and then a crash was heard on board the Rift, and the cutter lost her way and swung round on the wind—her sails flapping and bearing against her mast as though they would each moment fly into ribbons.

"Look to the wheel, you lubber!" shouted Ben Bowline. "What do you mean by that? Ah!"

Ben's exclamation arose from his sudden understanding of what had happened. The shot from the Spray had hit the man who had so very short time before taken the helm, and had dashed him from his post, leaving him a mangled corpse upon the deck, while the wheel swung round and broached to the cutter.

At this sight the crew raised a shout of rage, and one voice called out:

"The black flag—the black flag! Fight it out, and sink the man-slayers!"

Martin was at the wheel again, and the cutter was brought up to the wind without injury; and then Captain Dolan, looking ghastly pale, said:

"You see, my men—you see! This is what has come of treachery!—this is what has come of a letter to the Port Admiral. Make sail! She is overhauling us, hand over hand. Make sail!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"And you, spy and traitor, if you were ten times my son, you should fire on the king's ship!"

"I will not!" said Gerald.

"Lay the gun! Point her, Ben Bowline—you should know how to do that. The port-fire here—quick!"

The confusion on the deck of the Rift was now very great. The whole of the crew seemed to be at once fully alive to the danger of their situation; and while some of them eagerly bent a new and strange-looking sail to the yard, the others kept a firm hold of Gerald, and strained their eyes to look for the Spray.

The evening had now fairly set in, and a great rack of dark clouds appeared to be not half a mile from the surface of the sea, and to confine between them and it a quantity of baffling winds, that seemed to be darting in short, squally puffs in different directions, as if intent upon escape from the pressure.

The presence of the Spray was soon very easily detected.

The schooner had some apparatus on board, by which a strong ray of light was sent far over the sea, falling like a spirit on the agitated water. The crew of the Rift saw that strange, large circle of light slowly moving along, and they felt certain that in a few seconds it would fall upon the cutter.

"Keep her away!" cried Ben Bowline; but it was easier to give the order than to execute it; for although the circle of light that was upon the surface of the sea looked like a thing by itself, yet it was but the culmination of the ray from a lens; and at any part of that ray that the Rift might be, the circle would be found upon it, and so bring it fairly and easily into view.

It was in vain, then, that Martin altered the cutter's course a point or two, as he looked anxiously at the singular light.

Another minute, and it was within a couple of hundred yards of them, looking a gigantic arc of a circle, which must embrace all objects within its radius.

Then there was a loud cheer from over the sea. The light had fallen upon the Rift, and the crew of the Spray knew where to direct their fire.

"Crowd all our canvas!" shouted Dolan. "Do we gain on her?"

"Ay, sir—fast!"

"That will do. Ah! look out!"

He did look out himself, for at the flash of another gun from the Spray, he leaped from the gun on which he stood, and crouched behind the larboard bulwarks.

The shot tore its way through some of the

cordage of the Rift, and then Ben Bowline cried out:

"We must cripple that craft, or it is all up with the Rift!"

"Yes," shouted Dolan, "fire on it—fire! And as I am a living man, Gerald shall do it! I swear it—I swear it! He shall fire the first shot that makes the Rift a pirate!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE BATTLE IN THE BAY—GERALD'S DANGER.

It was quite clear that the Rift was, even under ordinary circumstances, by far a faster craft than the Spray; for the distance between the two vessels now increased with great rapidity.

The only wonder to the officers of the Spray was, that the Rift should allow herself to be chased right inshore in the way she did.

They did not expect a fight.

But Dolan had special objects to carry out; and in every one of his actions on that eventful night, those special objects were remembered. What they were in their entirety—and, we may add, in their villainy—will but too soon become painfully apparent.

Watching closely the Spray, he was resolved that the distance between it and the Rift should not be so great as to prevent the conflict from taking place, on which he relied for one of his purposes—which was thoroughly to commit Gerald to all the pains and penalties of being one of the crew of the Rift, and of firing on a king's ship.

The ghastly body of the man who had been killed at the wheel was flung, without any ceremony, into the sea; and then Dolan cried out:

"My men, you know as well as I do what we are about to do; but it won't hurt us now, as we are about to bid a long good-by to this coast; and I, for one, would fain that the government schooner should have a taste of our real quality before she goes, and before we go."

"Ay, ay!" shouted the crew.

"Very good, my men," added Dolan. "I see that we are all of one mind. Martin, ahoy!"

"Ay, sir."

"Can you get her out of this light that comes from the Spray?"

"The only way to get out of it is to steer so close to the vessel carrying it that they can't depress it low enough to reach you. Then it passes over you, and you are all in the dark."

There was a dead silence at these words, and Captain Dolan evidently shrunk from such a mode of dispensing with the ray of light that fell upon the Rift from the optical apparatus on board the Spray.

Martin spoke again:

"If that's done, they can't see you a bit; for their own light so dazzles them you might get alongside of 'em and they not know it, which just—you see, Captain Dolan, and you, ship-mates—goes to show that there's two ways of looking at everything."

It was Ben Bowline who then said:

"I'm for going in and giving them a shot or two!"

"And I!" "And I!" cried several of the crew.

Dolan's face grew paler still.

"I don't know," he said, "what to say to it. But if you really all wish it—"

"We do—we do!"

Martin did not wait for orders, but altering the course of the vessel, he put her on a long tack away from the coast. The circle of light fell on the water, and the Rift was clear of it on the moment.

"Now, boy," said Dolan, "you shall fire the gun!"

"Never—never!" cried Gerald. "I deny all that you have said against me, and I will not fire the gun!"

"Will not is a brave word. We shall see! Ah! not yet clear?"

"Oh, dear no!" said Martin, as the circle of light again fell on the vessel, after dodging about the sea for a few moments in search of it. "We must steer in a good bit closer before we get under it."

Again the cutter cleared the light for a few minutes, and a gun fired from the Spray did no damage whatever to the Rift.

"Clear the gun!" said Dolan.

All was ready. By the side of the long twelve-pounder a man stood with a smoldering port-fire and pole; but, with his lips compressed, Gerald, held tightly by the arms by two of the crew, was dragged close to the little piece of ordnance.

"I will not—I will not!" he cried.

"Now listen, all," said Dolan. "You see me here, and you see this boy—my own boy. I am going to do two things: I am going to give you all the greatest proof in the world of my good faith to you, by making my son one of you; and I am going to make him fire the gun as a punishment for that letter he sent to the Port Admiral—"

"It is false!" cried Gerald. "You cannot make me!"

"We will see to that!" cried one. "Here, Bill, give me a hold of the port fire!"

"There you are!"

"Now, captain, you point the gun; he will fire it!"

"No—no!" said Gerald.

The boy did not know exactly how he was to be made to commit the act, from which he shrunk with horror and a determination to die rather than be compelled to do it; but when this man seized him by the arm, and began to lash the port-fire to it, he made all the struggle he could to be free.

It was wonderful, then, to see how—although in the grasp of those powerful men—Gerald, light and slender as he was, fought for freedom, "Hit the young cub on the head!" cried one.

"No, no!" said Dolan, "not for worlds. Only make him fire the gun. I will point it—not too close in, Martin."

"All right."

The cutter had made two tacks, and was apparently now standing out to sea, with the schooner on its starboard bow. The people on board the Spray were evidently baffled, and hardly knew where to look for their slippery and agile antagonist. The light from the lens was shifted about over the sea; but the cutter was fairly within its area, and so escaped the beam of light.

The struggle on the deck of the Rift was great, for Gerald still fought with the sailors. Captain Dolan pointed the gun at the Spray—which was not difficult to see, making all the sail it could northward, and surrounded by the halo of the light with which it intended to fix the position of the Rift.

"Now!" he said.

"Help! Help! Schooner ahoy!" shouted Gerald.

"Gag him!" roared Captain Dolan.

"Schooner ahoy! Help!"

A twisted handkerchief was on the instant thrust into his mouth, and tied behind his head. The port-fire was securely fastened to his right arm, and by main force that arm was depressed toward the touch-hole of the gun.

"Now for it!" said Dolan. "Make him—make him fire it! Steady there; no matter if it hit or not, he still will have fired the first gun!"

Gerald felt his face dashed forward, almost to touching the gun, but still he kept the port-fire from touching the priming, with his utmost strength. The gag that was in his mouth prevented him now from crying out for help, and no doubt, in another moment, he would have been compelled to fire the gun—when, with a loud voice, Martin called out:

"A boat on the starboard bow!—an armed boat from the Spray on the starboard bow!"

"Boarders!" sung out Ben Bowline. "Repel boarders, my men, or you are all taken!"

These alarming sounds fell on the ears of the crew of the Rift like a trumpet-call to battle. Gerald, the gun, the letter to the Port Admiral—all were forgotten in the moment of intense anxiety to answer the call of Ben Bowline.

Hand-spikes, hatchets, cutlasses, and every offensive weapon that could be laid hold of at the moment, was seized upon, and a rush was made to the starboard bulwarks.

"Keep on, Martin," said Ben Bowline.

"Ay, ay!"

"Cutter ahoy!" sung out a voice, as if from the water. "Cutter ahoy! Surrender to his majesty's schooner Spray, or we will blow you out of the water."

Captain Dolan said not a word, but held on to the cordage, and shook in every limb; so that it devolved on Ben Bowline to make reply—which was done in the response of:

"Blow away!"

"Pull in, my men—board her! Hurrah! Make short work of her!"

The boat's crew raised a cheer, and in a few seconds the boat was on the starboard quarter of the Rift.

"Now!" said Ben Bowline.

There was a crashing sound, and he and Jackson, and two more of the crew of the Rift, let fall into the boat a heavy iron anvil, which was as much as they could all do to lift and tilt over the side.

The bottom of the Spray's boat went all to pieces on the instant, and the eight men that had been in it, with Mr. Green, were struggling in the water.

"Give way, Martin!" cried Ben. "That's it!"

The slight shift of the helm of the cutter brought her more on the wind, and she swept over the spot on which the boat of the Spray had been swamped.

There was a wailing cry, and then one voice cried aloud:

"Cutter ahoy! Pick us up!"

Captain Dolan—who, when he found what had happened, at once recovered his usual condition—replied by a recommendation for the speaker to go to a place known in a sailor's vocabulary as Davy Jones's locker; and then he sung out:

"Schooner ahoy! Schooner there on the starboard bow, ahoy!"

"Hilloa!" was the response. "Is that you, Mr. Green?"

"No; it's Brown—another color, that's all. Good-night."

Captain Dolan had mounted on the coil of the fore-castle to hail the schooner; and at this moment a stunning report came in his ears, and by the reel that the cutter gave, he was thrown from his position, and rolled head-over-heels down the fore-castle hatch.

"That will do," said Ben, who had taken the opportunity himself of firing the twelve-pounder; as, by the movement of the two vessels, he saw that he could get a good shot at the Spray.

The shot hit her mast, and brought down with a run a good portion of her upper gear and canvas.

"That's it!" said Martin. "Now, on we goes ag'in, Ben."

"Ay, ay, Bo—so we do, and no great harm done."

The Rift flew before the wind, and the distance between the two rapidly increased.

"Off with you, boy!" whispered Ben to Gerald. "Below with you. The skipper won't ask for you yet awhile."

"Where is he?"

"Broke his neck, I shouldn't wonder."

"Broke his neck! How—where?"

"Why, I saw him go, anyhow, down the fore-castle-hatch just now. So you be off while you can."

"Ben!"

Gerald laid both his hands on the broad breast of the smuggler, and spoke with deep emotion.

"Well, what is it?"

"I did not write to the Port Admiral. I did not, by word, or act, or thought, ever betray the Rift!"

"That'll do. I never thought you did."

"Thank you, Ben!"

"Go below at once, and count now on me and on old Martin; for I will tell him what you say and what I think; and, I rather take it, that is what he thinks, too."

Gerald pressed the hand of Ben for a moment, and then at once dived down into the cabin.

Gerald had not known how the catastrophe to the boat of the Spray had been brought about, or perhaps he would have shrunk a little from Ben Bowline, who had been the contriver of it.

But it was an immense relief to Gerald to be able to leave the deck.

Ben had released him from the gag, and put the handkerchief in his own pocket; and when Gerald reached the state-cabin of the Rift, as it was called, he was at once received into the arms of Captain Mocquet, who, while he rubbed the region of his stomach, exclaimed:

"*Sacre, mon ami!* I shall call to one moral—what you say?—duel that Monsieur Jackson. I do not like de box."

"What box?" said Gerald.

"Dis box," replied Mocquet, as he dealt Gerald a feeble blow in the stomach.

"Oh! I understand. Marie—how is poor, dear Marie?"

"She sleep like one mouton; that is, small—what you call him?—lamb."

"Where is he? I will have him up! I will have him!" roared the voice of Captain Dolan at this moment, and there was a scuffling noise at the hatchway.

"Dolan!" said Gerald.

"*Sacre!*" said Captain Mocquet.

"He shall yet come on deck. He shall yet fire on the schooner! I have sworn it!"

"He comes!" said Gerald, faintly. "Another struggle with that man! Oh, Heaven! direct me."

"Hold, Captain Dolan!" was now heard in the voice of Ben Bowline. "We don't believe it!"

"You—don't—believe—it! And pray, Ben Bowline, what is that you don't believe?"

"That Gerald wrote to the Port Admiral."

"In deed!"

"Oh, that's all very well. Captain Dolan; but Martin and I don't believe it."

"Martin and you are two mutinous rascals, and I will speak to both of you another time. I suppose, though, I may be permitted to go into my own cabin?"

"Well, as to that—"

"Oh, much obliged to you—ha! ha!—much obliged!"

The rapid sound of Captain Dolan's descending footsteps came plainly upon the ears of Gerald and of Captain Mocquet. The latter seized upon Gerald, and flinging open the sliding-door of the little berth where Marie slept, he dragged him in with him and abruptly closed it.

It was at that moment Captain Dolan reached the cabin.

All was darkness.

Coming out of the faint night light, which, after all, is ever a sort of light in the open air, and gleaming from the surface of the sea, the darkness of the cabin of the Rift was something very impenetrable and profound to Captain Dolan; and he paused on the threshold, as a man might pause on the brink of a well.

He had been very much bruised by his fall down the fore-castle-hatch. As no bones were

broken, he had managed to crawl up, with such an accession of savageness and rage about his heart and brain that he was capable of any act of cruelty and oppression.

The crew of the *Rift* he dared not, he well knew, raise a finger against; so his first idea was, to make Gerald feel the weight of his vengeance.

"Hilloa!" he said; "hilloa!"

There was no reply.

"Gerald, I say!"

No answer.

"Skulking, eh? Oh, we will soon put an end to that—oh, very soon! Stop a bit! Mocquet, hilloa! Captain Mocquet, hilloa! hoy!"

All was still.

"So you won't speak, either? No doubt you are both agreed on that. But who knows we won't find a way to make you both speak? Ha! ha! who knows? Come, now—I know well enough you are both here; so you may as well speak—eh?—eh?"

All the sound in the cabin was the hoarse echo of his own words.

"Oh, very well, very well. Please yourselves; only don't think you will do any good by it—don't make a rush at me; I am armed—I am armed!"

The idea that such might happen came over the craven heart of the ruffian, and he retreated a couple of steps up the hatchway, clear of the door.

"Hoy! a light here!" he said. "There was one, but it is out. A light here. 'Hoy!'"

One of the crew brought a lantern down to him and lit it on the steps.

"Toer! you are, sir."

"The *Spray*; where is she?"

"On, she's—why, there she is!"

The report of a gun from the *Spray* sufficiently answered the inquiry; but it was evident that the shot flew wide of the *Rift*.

"Keep on," said Dolan, "keep on for the bay, and let her just see us go in."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"This shall be the last," he muttered, as he went into the cabin again, and set the lantern on the table—"this shall be the last of it. No more voyages in the *Rift* for me. A good round sum—twenty thousand pounds—that will do; and Gerald hanged for piracy. Ha! ha! what glorious news for the admiral; when I tell him—when I tell him! Now, where are you?"

Dolan glared around him in surprise at the empty state of the cabin, and then his eyes fell on the little sliding door to the berth, and he said:

"Very wise that—very cunning. As if, now, I did not know of that. Come out—come out, I say! How faint I feel! Brandy, brandy! Another drop! This fall has shaken me—very much shaken me, indeed. Ah, that is the thing!"

Dolan had found the case of liquors and had solaced himself with a deep draught of brandy.

He felt decidedly better, but no more clear in his intellect or prudent in his speech.

"I don't see," he muttered, "why I should be troubled with Mocquet, as I shall be troubled. The sooner he is out of my way, the better for me. He will go on shore else, and there will be no end of bother. I am here with him—here alone, except the boy, and I don't care what he sees, or what he says. I will have him hung; and Sir Thomas Clifford, the admiral of the port, shall see that even-handed justice is done; and then I will write him a letter—oh, such a letter! Ha! ha!—such a letter! Good gracious!"

Dolan very nearly choked himself with the strained laughter that came over him at the idea of what a letter he would send to Admiral Sir Thomas Clifford. It took him some time to recover, and then he looked at the panel, that would slide back and open a way to the berth leading from the cabin, and the deadly, hyena-like glare flashed from his eyes again, and he plunged his hand in the breast of his apparel, as he said:

"Captain Mocquet! Captain Mocquet! I want you, if you please. I know perfectly well where you are, and I want you, Captain Mocquet!"

There was no reply.

"Ah, you pretend to be asleep, you and Gerald. You are perhaps thinking that you will resist me—that both of you have got into a sort of citadel, where you are hid—you will find yourselves mistaken. Captain Mocquet, I say!"

Dolan thought he heard a slight movement on the other side of the panel, and he dropped on his knees by the table and took a pistol from his breast and leveled it over the table, shutting one eye, as he thought, very slowly, so as to take good aim at Captain Mocquet, when he should make his appearance.

"Are you coming? Are you coming, my dear Captain Mocquet? I am waiting for you. There is no danger—not a bit—not a bit! Yet, stop; I want to say something to you. I was nearly forgetting—very nearly forgetting. Will you give me that order for the twenty thousand francs? Eh? Will you give me that, and then I will tell you where your little daughter is? Ha, ha!"

Dolan was just under the influence of the ardent spirits he had taken sufficiently to have lost his discretion and to utter aloud his secret

thoughts, as well as those he wished to keep to himself; so that Captain Mocquet and Gerald, by both listening attentively, heard much that they otherwise could not have faintly guessed at.

They did both listen most silently.

Marie slept soundly; neither the confusion upon the deck of the *Rift*, nor the firing both from it and from the *Spray*, nor the struggle that had taken place with Gerald when he was forced upon the deck, had sufficed to awaken her.

But the noise had ceased, and Marie had slept on as before.

She slept still.

Captain Mocquet and Gerald were close to the panel that opened into the cabin, but they had no notion that Dolan was presenting a pistol to that panel, which, at the caprice of a moment he might discharge, possibly to the injury of Marie.

Had such a thought as that passed over their minds, they would not have hesitated a moment to sally out and confront him.

As it was, Gerald whispered to Captain Mocquet:

"I had better go to him, and speak to him."

"N—non. I shall."

"Not you, sir! Have you not heard that his threats are directed against you? Me he reserves for some future fate, which will give him more satisfaction; so, for the present, I am safe."

Dolan spoke again.

"Now I give you fair notice—both of you. I will have you out—out at once. I tell you, Mocquet, if you don't come out at once, and speak, I will shoot you through the panel!"

"Ah!" said Mocquet, and he made a step forward; but Gerald took him by the arm and drew him back.

"No—no. I will go!"

"N—non, non!"

It was either her father's voice or Gerald's, which at this moment broke through the protracted slumbers of poor Marie. With a sigh, she opened her eyes, and her idea was that she was in her own little cot on board the *Coquette*.

With precisely a similar action to that she had used while on board the *Coquette*, Marie stretched forth her hand and touched the brass handle of the sliding-door; she drew it open, and glancing from the berth in which she lay, she said:

"Bon jour, mon cher pere. Ou sommes-nous?"

Now these were the precise words she had uttered, when Captain Dolan first saw her in the cabin of the *Coquette*, while bent upon his plundering expedition among poor Captain Mocquet's lockers.

The attitude, too, of the young girl was the same; and around her waist hung the same bit of edging to her night-dress, which he had noticed when her arm was outstretched to open the similar little sliding door on board the *luggar*.

The lantern—by which Captain Dolan could see now well about him in the cabin—sent a full ray through a hole in the side, upon the face and form of Marie.

If death itself had breathed with its icy sighs upon the heart of Dolan he could not have been more completely paralyzed than he was at the moment.

The confusion of his intellect was rapid and complete; and he could do nothing but still kneel by the table and glare at what he could consider to be nothing else than an apparition.

You might have counted twenty slowly, while Dolan, with parted lips and staring eyes, regarded the fair image before him; and then the agony of his fear, which else would have killed him, found vent in a howl of fright that echoed through the ship.

He fell completely over on his back. He yelled again, and shrieked fearfully. He rolled to his knees again. He struggled half-way to his feet.

"Help—help! Have mercy upon me! Ben-Martin! Oh, save me!"

He reached the hatchway on his hands and knees; still yelling for aid or mercy he reached the deck, and fell into the arms of the terrified crew, who, hearing such yells and shouts from the cabin, had made a rush to the hatchway to ascertain the cause.

CHAPTER X.

THE VISITOR TO THE BOAT-HOUSE—CAPTAIN MORTON'S DESPAIR AND REGRETS

ONCE more we take our way to that little bit of beach, on which now the advancing tide was surging, and listen to the words—few now and faint—which were falling from the lips of the dying smuggler. Captain Morton was so deeply interested in everything that had been uttered by Hutchins, in relation to the child that had been saved from the wreck of the *Sarah Ann*, that the knock at the door of the hut had to be repeated, before he paid attention to it.

The dying man heard it, however.

It had all the effect upon him of a summons to the grave.

With a loud cry, he sprang up to a sitting posture in his bed; and holding out his arms before him, as though he would ward something off, he shrieked out:

"No—no; not yet—oh, not yet! I cannot go! I know you! Oh, spare me yet—for the love of Heaven, and of Heaven's mercy, spare me yet! Let me have time to repent."

"Who is it?" said Captain Morton.

"Death—death!"

"Nay—you are deceiving yourself."

"No; it is death—death!"

"Death does not come in a material form. Compose yourself, and hope for the best. You may still seek for mercy where mercy is infinite."

With a deep sigh, the smuggler sunk back upon his miserable bed.

Captain Morton went to the door—which, although at the request of the dying man it had been closed, could easily have been opened from without. The captain flung it open, saying, as he did so:

"Who is there?"

There was no reply from the person seeking admission to the boat-house; but by the dim light, Captain Morton could see that it was a young girl, with a shawl placed over her head, and pinned or tied beneath her chin, while the long ends hung down over her shoulders.

"Who are you?" he said, again. "Whom seek you here, my girl?"

"Jabez."

"Who is Jabez?"

"Hutchins, sir."

"He is very ill—dying, I think—and cannot see any one. You come from some of the cottages, I suppose?"

"Oh, no—no! I have brought him this."

She produced a little basket, over which was a clean, white cloth; and it was just at that moment, while the captain had his hand on one of the handles of the little basket, and the young girl still retained her hold of the other, that the sullen echo of a gun, and then of another, came from over the sea, apparently far off.

"Ah!" said the girl, "I fear—"

"What do you fear?"

"Poor Gerald—my poor Gerald! Oh, God! he goes to him."

The young girl started from the open door of the little boat-house—and then, suddenly pausing, she looked up into the night sky.

A beautiful rocket rose high among the clouds, and then, bursting, sent down a rain of emerald-colored sparks. It seemed as if some faint reflection from that green rain of light found its way to the fair face of the young girl; for, as Captain Morton looked at it, he could hardly persuade himself that it was not something more than mortal in its beauty that met his eyes.

A deep and strange feeling came over his heart; and he knew not why or wherefore; but the tears rolled up to his eyes, and he stepped toward the girl with his arms outstretched, with an impulse to clasp her to his breast which could not be withstood.

"The *Rift*!" she said, as she clasped her hands. "It is the *Rift*!"

Another moment, and, fleet as a chamois, she was gone. A light flutter of drapery in the darkness, and he could see no more of her.

Captain Morton stood on the threshold of the boat-house like a man entranced.

"What is this?" he gasped. "Why am I thus full of agitation? Why does my heart beat so rapidly and strangely, and why are my eyes filled with tears?"

With a deep sigh, Captain Morton re-entered the hut.

"I am very weak," he said, "and little trifles move me. It is because I have suffered so much."

The basket that the young girl had brought with her, she left in the hands of the captain, who now placed it on the side of the bed, as he said in a low voice, betraying great exhaustion of feeling:

"Hutchins, here is a basket. I suppose containing some delicacies for you, sent by some compassionate friend or neighbor. Do you hear me?"

Hutchins did not move.

"Try to rouse yourself a little. Here is a basket, I say, which has been brought by a young girl."

The light had got very dim in the hut, and Captain Morton could not very well see that awful look of another world which was now on the face of the dying man. It was only in a faint whisper that he could speak.

"Come—come—come!"

"Where? What?"

"Nearer—nearer. Come!"

"Yes."

"I am—going now! I see the light. Oh, God! it is lurid and fearful and yet—yet—"

"Yet, what?"

"I hear soft voices praying, and they utter my name—even my sinful name!"

"Be comforted."

"Hush! hush! hush!"

Captain Morton was silent; and as the light slowly waned away, and got dimmer and dim-

mer, he could hear the breathing of the smuggler grow fainter. When the dying man spoke again, it was in a low, faint whisper:

"Did you say a basket—a girl?"

"Yes."

"With fair hair, and so sweet a look—"

"I saw that she was fair, and very lovely."

"God! God!"

"Some neighbor's child?"

With a writhing movement, the smuggler approached close to Captain Morton; and in a strange, spasmodic way, he whispered to him:

"That was the child that was saved from the wreck of the Sarah Ann. Her clothes were marked with the name of Grace Morton!"

Captain Morton cried out aloud.

"My child—my own—my little one! Oh, Heaven! My darling—my Grace!"

"You—you—the father—"

"I am—I am! I have come from afar over the sea to seek for news of this little one. I am Captain Morton, and you speak of my child!"

"Thank—thank God!"

Boom! came the thunder of a gun at sea; and the spirit of the smuggler fled.

"Speak again—oh, speak again!" cried Captain Morton. "Where is she? Where has she fled? Oh, tell me! One word—only one word!"

All was still. The frantic appeals of the father were but to an insensible clod. Then, with a wild rush, Captain Morton flew from the hut, and cried aloud:

"Grace—Grace! my child! my own darling! It is your father calls you—your poor, suffering father! Grace—my own dear one! my own little one!—do you not hear me! Grace! Grace! Whither have you fled? Your father calls you, to hold you to his heart forever and forever!"

With such shouts and cries, Captain Morton fled along the beach, and up the narrow pathway that led to the town.

It is long now since we have set foot within the precincts of that sea-girt house, where first we described the young girl in conversation with the old sailor, who had charge of the beacon of the cliff, as described in the first chapter of this veritable history.

We now return to that mysterious place.

Joseph and the young girl are no longer on the top of the cliff. They occupy a position on a sort of plateau, about half-way down the face of it; and they are both looking out to the sea.

"Come, come, Miss Grace," said Joseph. "You will have Mrs. Wagner coming after you soon, and you know her."

"I do know her, Joseph; but I know that I am no longer a little child."

"Well, no more you are, miss, if it comes to that; but you know that your father—"

"I will not call him father, Joseph."

"Well, well, miss, don't, then; and I can't say he is much of a father to you. What makes you shake so, Miss Grace, to-night? You don't seem like yourself."

"I hardly know, Joseph."

"Why, now you are a-crying."

"I know I am. I don't mind telling you. I went, as you know, in the boat to Hutchins's cottage a little time ago."

"Yes, miss; and Tom rowed you along the little bit of coast—didn't he?"

"He did. I went to take him the little basket of things that I always take him once a week."

"You are a good sort of a dear, you are," said Joseph, in a contemplative tone, as though reflecting aloud.

"You will take care that Mrs. Wagner don't know that I ever go, Joseph; because, if you and Tom did not help me, I could not do so, you know."

"All's right, Miss Grace—all's right. I only hope that if I am ever laid up in ordinary, like poor old Jabez Hutchins, miss, some good angel, as like you as possible, will look after me a bit."

"I will, Joseph."

"Lord bless you, miss! you will be a grown-up young lady by then, and be getting married."

"Oh no—no! I mean to stay with Gerald all my life, Joseph."

"Well, miss, that's as it may be; but you was a-going to tell me something."

"Yes. I did not see Hutchins; but at the door of his hut, a gentleman met me, and took the basket from me; and while I was talking to him, I saw the green rocket, and made sure that the Rift was close in; so I ran off at once, and made Tom row back."

"Well, miss, it was all right enough about the rocket; and the Rift is coming in, but she is beating on and off a little, for some reason or another. That's all, you see, my dear Miss Grace. Captain Dolan has a reason for all that, you may depend; but the Rift will soon be in, I take it, and then you will see Gerald again, poor lad."

"Yes, yes," sighed Grace. "I will hope that."

"Now, what makes you sigh in that sort of way, miss?"

"I was thinking—"

"About what?"

"That gentleman I saw at the door of Hut-

chins's cottage. And it was so strange, too, Joseph, that after Tom had rowed the punt quite round the rocks, I thought I heard some one call out my name."

"What name, miss?"

"Grace! Grace!"

"Well, that's odd; but you see it couldn't be, so there ain't no sort of good in worrying about it. There we are—there we are!"

Another rocket at this moment came high into the air; and, as the others had done, sent down its shower of green fire.

"Now, miss, the Rift will soon be in, and Captain Dolan will expect to find the cliff open."

"Yes—yes," sighed Grace. "But I shall see Gerald now—my own dear brother Gerald! Oh Joseph! he must not be made go again on board the Rift."

"Hush, hush! I will speak to you about that another time, Miss Grace."

"Oh! you will, will you?" muttered a female voice from some dozen paces distant, down a rugged staircase in the body of the cliff. "Dolan shall hear of this!"

The voice was Mrs. Wagner's, a woman of half Dutch and half German descent, and who had been the housekeeper to Dolan for the last five years, and who was deeply in his confidence.

Mrs. Wagner now stepped forward, saying, as she advanced:

"Come, Grace, it is high time for you to retire!"

"No—no! I intend to stay here, and see the Rift come in!"

"Then you won't!"

Mrs. Wagner made a movement to take Grace by the arm and force her away; but the young girl stepped up close to Joseph, as she said:

"Protect me; I will not go!"

"Avast, there, Mrs. Wagner!" said Joseph. "Can't you let the young thing alone?"

"You mind your own business, or perhaps I can say a something to Captain Dolan that you won't like!"

"Well, then, Mrs. Wagner, since you say so much, you can just go and say, and do your worst; and I won't have the young thing interfered with. I don't care about your Captain Dolan. What is he to me, or to any of us? We all row in the same boat. He's a smuggler, and so are we—only the Rift happens to be his, so we go out with him; but he has no more power or right to say to me, or to any of us: do this, or do that, than we have to him!"

"This is mutiny!"

Joseph laughed.

"You stay here, Miss Grace, and you shall see the Rift come in, whether Mrs. Wagner likes it or not!"

"I will—I will! Oh! thank you, Joseph!"

"Very well," said Mrs. Wagner, in a tone of suppressed rage—"very well, you will settle that with Captain Dolan!"

"Ay, ay!" cried Joseph. "And there's the Rift!"

Plainly now visible from the cliffs was the Rift, about half a mile from the shore, and apparently heaving to, while in the offing, and, so to speak, shutting the Rift up in the bay, was the Spray.

This was the position in which we saw these two vessels at the commencement of our narrative, and which it has been our duty to follow them to, through the many adventures and hair-breadth escapes of the smuggler and pirate.

We shall now see how it was that the Rift so mysteriously disappeared before the eyes of the astonished officers and crew of the Spray.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAVERN IN THE CLIFF—A SUBTERRANEAN HOME.

To all appearance, the Rift was slowly drifting either on the beach, or right on to the cliffs that rose so abruptly from it.

We shall see that it will do neither the one nor the other of these fatal things.

Abutting out into the bay some couple of hundred yards, was a huge mass of cliff of about a quarter of a mile in total width, although irregular in its surface, and presenting every possible variety of indentation and jagged outline that a chalk mass is susceptible of. So far out did the greater portion of this mass of cliff extend into the bay, that the lowest tide still left a good depth of water laving its base; and when the sea ran high, the waves roared and lashed themselves to fury far up the storm-beaten natural battlement.

It was right on to this chalky mass that the Rift seemed drifting to her own destruction.

Apparently commencing at the surface of the sea, but in reality going deep down into the chalk formation, there had been an open cavern—a sort of cleft in the cliff of about fifty feet in height from the sea-level at half-tide, and some forty, or more, feet in width. Into this cavern the waves had been in the habit of dashing with a wild fury that would have appalled any persons who might have been seized with a desire to penetrate its depths; but yet, it was evident that there had been persons adventurous enough

for the purpose; and but that there were some special circumstances that made that particular portion of the cliff avoided, no doubt the cavern would have been much better known than it was.

The cliff above was undercut to such a depth, that a notion had taken possession of the country-people and fishermen, that it was dangerous, and would come down in a mass some day; and this being represented to the lord of the manor, whose jurisdiction extended to the verge, he had put up a railing and a warning—which, for a considerable distance inland, kept people from approaching the cliff's verge.

All this helped Dolan and his crew.

It was many years before the time of which we write, that he had thoroughly explored the cavern, and found out, no doubt, its great capabilities as a refuge for a small smuggling vessel. But that was not sufficient.

Not only was the cavern to be adopted as a refuge for so small a vessel as the cutter—if hard pressed by any pursuit in the Channel—but some means must be adopted by which the character of the refuge should be unsuspected entirely. This was accomplished ingeniously and successfully.

Several old mainsails were procured by Dolan, which, when sewn together, were sufficiently large to cover up the whole entrance to the sea-cavern. By strong eye-bolts fastened deeply in the cliff, and some cordage, this canvas covering to the cavern could at any time be made secure or unshipped at pleasure. It was well daubed with chalk, and the stains of the winter rains upon it assimilated it to the color of the cliff most exactly. It wrapped itself round the projections, and fell into the hollows; and at half a mile distant, no one could possibly—unless specially informed that there was something to discover—have detected this canvas covering from solid cliff.

Dolan, for years, had the cavern and cliff to himself, and under cover of darkness, fog, or smoke, had found it easy to have the canvas slipped aside, so that the cutter might sail into the cavern, and then replaced in a few moments.

The effect was as if she had sailed into the solid cliff.

It was by the firing of her guns that she kept up at the Spray for some few minutes, and by the smoke made by the Spray in answering that firing, that the Rift got up sufficient obscurity on the night in question to enable her to slip into the cavern, and have the canvas covering replaced again securely.

All was darkness in this home in the solid cliff, with the one exception of a gleam of light in day-time that straggled down from a hidden opening about half-way up, and toward which rude steps had been made.

This served for ventilation to the cavern.

It was on the little plateau on the face of the cliff at the top of these steps that Joseph and Grace had stood during the progress of the discourse we have recorded that they had together; and it was up these rude steps that Mrs. Wagner had come to order Grace to retire for the night.

A couple of the crew of the Rift were always kept at home in the cavern to manage the canvas-covering; and when the green rocket was reported as having been seen in the offing, it was the understood signal that the Rift was coming for shelter.

And so, amid the smother of the smoke from her own guns, and from those of the Spray, the Rift disappeared bodily from before the astonished eyes of the officers and crew of the government vessel.

Slowly did the last remnants of the smoke curl up over the brow of the cliff, and sweetly now did the moon look down upon the waters of the little bay.

With slackened sails, and beating off and on with a heaving, restless motion, the Spray slowly drifted into the bay.

Surprise not unmingled with a superstitious feeling, sat upon the countenances of the crew of the Spray.

There was, indeed, a look of no small consternation on the weather-beaten countenance of Mr. Royle; and it was some few moments before he spoke to the lieutenant, "Mr. Green, who was by his side, and who had only by strong swimming saved himself when the Spray's boat was swamped by the anvil Ben Bowline had flung into it from the deck of the Rift."

"Have I lost my eyesight, sir?" he said; "or is it true and real that the chase is gone?"

"Gone, indeed," said Mr. Green, with a strangely-puzzled look.

"But she was there."

"She was—yes, she was there!"

The crew of the Spray had gathered to the larboard bow, which lay toward the shore; and in silence gazed into the waters of the bay, which sparkled now in the moonbeams, and looked calm and placid—land-locked as they were to so considerable an extent.

"Mr. Royle," said Lieutenant Green, "he has sunk his vessel!"

"I don't know, sir."

"What else can have happened?"
 "Well, Mr. Green, I never did till now give way to those ideas."

"What ideas?"
 "About phantom-ships, sir, and those sort of things; but if it be possible that a phantom-ship should show itself on the blue water, I should say that was one with whom we had a running fight for the last six hours."

"Pho!"
 "It's all very well to say 'Pho!—pho,' sir, but where is she?"

"At the bottom of the bay."
 Mr. Royle shook his head in evident incredulity on that point; and it was equally evident, from the strange and anxious manner of Lieutenant Green, that he did not feel quite at his ease on the subject. After a further pause of some few moments, he said:

"We have a boat left, I fancy?"
 "Ay, ay, sir; but it is the small one."
 "Never mind; let her be launched and manned. I will go myself to see what I can of this mystery."

Mr. Royle gave the order, and in a few moments the only remaining boat of the schooner—which was a small one that would not conveniently hold more than four rowers—was dancing on the waves by the side of the Spray. Lieutenant Green leaped into his place, and took the tiller-ropes in his hands, as he said:

"Pull in, my men."
 The boat from the Spray shot rapidly through the water until it was about a hundred and fifty yards from the cliffs, and evidently as near as possible over the spot on which the Rift had been last seen.

The lieutenant made a sign with his hand, and the men rested on their oars, only now and then giving a light pull to keep the boat from drifting.

"There is where she was, Joe," said the lieutenant, speaking to one of the seamen.

"Ay, ay, sir."
 "Over with the grapple and pull slowly."
 A barbed hook was cast over and let drop about twenty feet into the sea, and then the boat was slowly pulled over the spot twice.

"If the cutter had been sunk, surely that grapple would have touched her."
 "No," said Lieutenant Green, half aloud.
 "If she has been sunk, she must lie very much over."

The lieutenant now looked to the right and to the left, but there was nothing but the tall cliff visible—not an opening of any sort through which the cutter could have slipped and found shelter.

The mystery was complete.
 "I cannot make it out," said the lieutenant.
 "Pull back, my men."

This the men set to work upon with a right good will; and, despite of the tide which set into the bay, they would have got the schooner's boat out of the little land-locked place with much greater speed than they brought it in, had not a circumstance happened which induced the lieutenant to pause in his progress.

Just as the boat of the Spray crossed the beams of the moon again, something appeared to be floating in the water, which looked like a small keg—such as a man might sling around his waist or across his shoulders, if taking a journey where refreshment would be scarce, or impossible to get.

"What is that? In with it!" cried Lieutenant Green. "That will do."

The boat was backed a stroke or two, and one of the men, leaning over, caught the little keg and dragged it into the stern at the feet of Mr. Green.

"What is it?"
 "A keg, sir."
 "It is metal, surely."

"Hold, sir—hold hard, ahoy!" shouted Joe, as he suddenly snatched the little keg from the lieutenant, and flung it into the sea.

Joe was not one moment too soon with this movement, for scarcely had the object touched the surface of the water than it exploded with a loud report.

The fragments of it flew over the men, but no one was hurt, with the exception of Lieutenant Green himself, who got a slight graze upon one temple.

The confusion which this little incident excited was soon over; but the men still kept the boat in the same position.

"This is diabolical!" said Lieutenant Green, as he stanch the blood from his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Are you much hurt, sir?"
 "Oh! no. A mere scratch. It was a shell."
 "A sort of shell, sir."

"But what made you know it, or suspect it, Joe?"

"I heard it make an odd noise, sir; and I all of a sudden recollected I had seen such a thing in the Spanish Main, sir, when the pirates came into a town called Guayaquila—or something like that, sir."

"There is something more in all this than I can make out," added the lieutenant. "Pull back at once."

"Ay, ay, sir."
 The men soon traversed the distance now to

the Spray, and Lieutenant Green at once dived into the captain's cabin, to report what had occurred to the Honorable Charles Minto Grey, who was lolling, as usual, upon a sofa, and smoking.

"Sir, I would report to you."

"Oh! well, sit down. Take a weed."

"Thank you, sir. The Rift has slipped through our fingers."

"Very good."

"Good, sir?"

"Ah, yes! I suppose now we can make sail to Ryde, or Cowes, or some of the yacht squadrons' places; for I never was so tired out in all my life, of this den they call a state-cabin. My man, too, says that all the Moselle is gone."

"Well, but, sir, it's the most singular circumstance."

"So I say; for, by Jove, I haven't drank it."

"But I mean about the Rift."

"Oh! ah—well?"

"Perhaps you did not pay much attention."

"Oh! by Jove, I did, though, for I fully expected another shot into the cabin. Why can't they take better aim. They must know where the captain's cabin is; and what is the use of plaguing him? Upon my word it is too bad! What is the use of having a great-uncle in the admiralty, I should like to know? What is the use of everything and everybody? I'm bored to death!"

After giving utterance with unusual energy to those patriotic sentiments, Captain the Honorable Charles Minto Grey lifted his feet onto the sofa, and made two or three plunging kicks to signify how disgusted he was with society in general.

"It is provoking, sir."

"Oh! by Jove, yes."

"But still, sir, the best and the shortest way out of it is to capture the Rift."

"Go and do it then. You have my free leave. As long as I can have my weed and my Moselle, or sitting in peace, I don't care what you do."

"I will report to you, then, sir, what happened. We chased the Rift into the bay, and thought we had her quite secure, when she disappeared in a wreath of smoke."

"Then enter in the log that the Rift is settled, and had gone off in its own smoke—I don't know what the admiralty require further—and then make for Portsmouth."

"Were not the orders, sir, to report to Sir Thomas Clifford, the port admiral, at Falmouth?"

"Oh! by Jove, yes! Well, make for Falmouth."

"And give up the chase, sir?"

"Why, good gracious, where is the chase? Have you not just told me she has gone off in a puff of smoke, or something of that sort? Foundered, of course. Foundered at sea. You can enter in the log, that after an engagement, lasting six hours, the Rift was hulled to end of times, and at last bit between wind and water, and down she went with all hands. That will do, I take it."

"Very good, sir!"

Lieutenant Green went slowly upon deck. There was sufficient of the sailor about him to make him feel intensely dissatisfied with the whole affair; and as he certainly could not satisfactorily account to his own mind for the disappearance of the Rift, it was with great reluctance that he gave the order to steer for Falmouth.

"Can you make out anything Mr. Royle?" he said, as the sailing-master took his glass from his eye, with which he had been taking a long observation of the coast and the bay.

"No, sir. Only some people on the top of the cliff."

"Oh, that's nothing."

"It ain't much, sir—only the odd thing is, that they seemed to come this way over the edge of it, and then get out of sight some how that I can't make out."

"Let me look."

Lieutenant Green took a long look; and he saw the same phenomenon that had surprised Mr. Royle. Along the top of the cliff he saw a man come in somewhat of a crouching position, and when he got to the extreme verge, he seemed to disappear over it, or into it, in some way.

For the moment the lieutenant thought that he must have fallen over, and he shifted the glass down to the sea, expecting to see the splash of his fall; but such was not the case.

"I can't make that out," he said.

"Nor I, sir."

"It strikes me, Mr. Royle, that there is something more about all those cliffs and rocks than we know of."

"Sure of it, sir."

"And now we shall see no more."

The moon, at the moment that the lieutenant spoke, became completely hidden by a mass of clouds. A double darkness seemed to fall upon the waters of the bay, and the schooner rolled in the trough of rather a heavier sea than had for some time shown itself.

"Keep her easy!" sung out Mr. Royle, to the man at the helm.

"Ay, ay sir! Easy she is."

The Spray took a long tack out of the bay. The darkness of the night now appeared to be excessive, after the bright moonlight, and not a particle of even the dimmest reflected light seemed to come from land or sea until the Spray had nearly cleared one of the headlands; and then, far away to westward, the Lizard-light was faintly visible.

"That will do," said Mr. Royle.

"What light is that?" whispered Lieutenant Green, as a strange, reddish-looking star appeared a little over the surface of the sea. "It seems to me as if it came from where we have been so recently. My night-glass, Mr. Dowton."

"Yes, sir," said the midshipman, who, much to his disgust, had been drafted on board the schooner.

The night-glass was soon at the eye of the lieutenant, who took a long and anxious look at the red, star-like light in the bay. It appeared to be about twenty or thirty feet from the surface of the sea, and to be set right in the face of the cliff.

How it could be there, what sustained it, or what it meant, were puzzling questions that Lieutenant Green found it impossible to answer. Handing the night-glass to Mr. Royle, he said:

"You look at it, Mr. Royle, and see what you think of it."

Mr. Royle took a long look.

"Well, sir, I don't know a bit what to think of it. The whole affair, sir, is a touch above me."

The lieutenant dived into the cabin again. The Honorable Charles Minto Grey was fast asleep.

"Hilloa! Sir—sir!"

"What—what is it?"

"I want your leave, sir, to cruise about the bay till daylight; for I feel quite certain that, if we do, we shall make some discovery about the Rift."

"Good gracious, Mr. Green! what do you mean? Is it not down in the log that the Rift is sunk?"

"Yes, sir; but—"

"Mr. Green!"

"Yes, sir."

"You will be so good as to bear this in mind, once for all: Whatever is down in the log of one of his majesty's vessels in commission is, and must be true."

"But, sir—"

"Is and must be true. Do you hear me, Mr. Green?—is and must be true. The Rift is sunk. Good-night, Mr. Green."

"Good-night, sir."

The lieutenant took his way slowly on deck, and in a low tone, he said:

"Keep her for Falmouth, Mr. Royle."

"And the red light, sir?"

"Oh! that is not down in the log! Good-night, Mr. Royle—good-night."

Lieutenant Green dived down below to his own cabin, leaving Mr. Royle in a state of great bewilderment in regard to the whole proceedings of the evening. However, he set the night-watches, and then, with his eyes fixed upon the odd-looking, little red star in the cliff, he communed with himself after his own fashion.

CHAPTER XII.

CAPTAIN MORTON VISITS THE PORT ADMIRAL.
 It was not for long that Captain Morton, after he had left the little boat-but of the dead smuggler, allowed his feelings to obtain so complete a mastery over him as they had done.

A man of a more gallant spirit than he never lived; and there was but one thing that could ever shake the serenity of his soul. Something must touch his affections before this representative of a brave and gallant people could be thrown off his balance in the way we have seen he was.

But the idea that he had actually been in the presence of his long-lost child!—the notion that he had seen and conversed with her, and yet let her slip from him, was too much for him; and he had, on the impulse of the moment, acted as we have described.

But, as we say, this excess of feeling passed away; and by the time he reached the head of the little, narrow, gorge like pass that led down to the sea, he was himself again.

When there, Captain Morton paused, and, pressing both his hands upon his heart, he strove to still its wild, tumultuous beatings.

"I must think now," he said—"I must think now, calmly and quietly, of all this! There must be no hurry—no flurry; but I must be calm and clear in all that I attempt to do. I will be calm—I will be calm!"

The strong determination prevailed, and gradually his heart stilled itself, and he was able to look about him without confusion, and to arrange his ideas.

Among the first things that struck him then, was his broken engagement to dine with Sir Thomas Clifford, the Port Admiral. Then he asked himself if he should stay about the place where he was, and make inquiry concerning his daughter, or at once apply to those who had authority to aid him?

If the latter, who could have more authority

of the kind that he probably would require to have exerted, than Sir Thomas Clifford himself.

By placing it very close to his eyes, Captain Morton was able just to discover, by his watch, that it was nine o'clock.

The evening was still young.

"Not too late—not too late," he said. "I will seek this Port Admiral at once, and claim his sympathy and help. There was a something in his countenance which assures me I shall readily receive both."

In fact, nothing could be more prepossessing than the manner of Sir Thomas Clifford, tinged, as it was, with just such an amount of settled sadness as awakened all one's sympathies in his behalf; for he was a man who had evidently seen some deep sorrow.

Perhaps, after all, that was the hidden tie which drew him and Captain Morton together; and as there are many things in earth and in heaven that transcend our philosophy; it may be that these two men, from a kind of community of suffering, found themselves irresistibly drawn together.

We shall see.

The moment he had fairly formed the determination to seek Sir Thomas Clifford, Captain Morton shaped his course for the town, the lights of which were plainly visible as soon as he fairly turned out of the narrow lane that led to the beach.

Of the first person he met, Captain Morton inquired the way to the Port Admiral's, and was directed to a large house, standing in a garden, not a hundred yards from where he was. The summons of Captain Morton for admission was replied to by an old man, who had all the appearance of having been a seaman—nor did the manner in which he replied to the questions of Captain Morton, as to whether the admiral was within or not, at all belie the supposition.

"Ay, ay, sir!" he said; "and if so be, sir, as you be Captain Morton, the admiral is in a rare way about you, sir!"

"I owe him many apologies, for I ought to have been here to dinner."

"That's it, sir—got out of your reckoning, mayhap, sir, in unknown latitudes."

The old sailor, who had been boatswain on board of a vessel which had been long under the command of Admiral Clifford, led the way to the dining-room, where no one was to be seen, although there were ample evidences of recent occupation.

"Oh!" said the boatswain. "The admiral has gone into the drawing-room, I take it, sir. This here's the way—you make a short tack to starboard, sir, and then you beat up east again, and there you are—"

"Thank you."

"Captain Morton, sir!"

The old sailor flung open the door of a handsome drawing-room, which was brilliantly lighted with wax candles, and Captain Morton found himself in the presence of Sir Thomas Clifford and two ladies.

"I have sincerely to apologize, admiral," said Captain Morton, after he had courteously bowed to the ladies, "for breaking my engagement with you."

"Something that you could not help prevented you keeping it," said the admiral; "and, as better late than never, I am delighted to see you now, Ben!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Bring the wine in here."

"Now, brother"—said one of the ladies, who looked exceedingly prim and demure—"now, brother."

"What is it, Agnes?"

"You know that it is really—anything but—hem! That it is contrary to all etiquette."

"Now, sister, do be quiet; and for Heaven's sake, never mind about etiquette. I was in hopes that we should not have heard that word this evening!"

"I can assure you, brother, that etiquette is—"

"Ben?"

"Yes, marm."

"You were not absolutely told to bring the wine here—it was a subject of discussion."

"Beg pardon, marm, but the admiral—he said, 'Bring the wine; and here it is.'"

"Yes—yes," said Sir Thomas Clifford. "That is right, Ben. Always obey orders, Ben."

"Always do, sir!"

"Yes—you literal, dreadful man," said Miss Clifford. "I know you do."

"Oh, Lor!" said Ben, as he left the room.

"Brother," said Miss Clifford. "I'm surprised at you."

"What for, now, sister?"

"Such a scandalous breach of etiquette!"

"Why! what have I done now?"

"To imagine it possible that I could make any agreement with that horrid Ben Bolt!"

"Oh! is that all?"

"All—all! Good-evening, brother—good-evening, Captain—"

"Captain—"

"Morton, madam."

"Captain Morton."

Miss Clifford, with a great rustling of an exceedingly thick silk dress, sailed out of the room.

The other lady, who had only smiled once or twice, although in a faint sort of way, during their dialogue—now spoke, and the subdued sweetness of her voice made a great impression upon Captain Morton.

"My sister," she said, "has some little prejudices; but she is one of the best-hearted creatures in the world."

"And here I am," said the admiral, "sitting here, and have never introduced you, Captain Morton, to my wife. Pray pardon me, Captain Morton, my dear; Lady Clifford, Captain Morton. I don't know what it is, but I feel an unusual weight at my heart to-night—an unusual weight."

"My dear?" said Lady Clifford, anxiously.

"Oh, it is nothing—it is nothing. It will pass away—it will soon pass away. But—"

"You will excuse us both, Captain Morton," said Lady Clifford, sadly; "but we are sufferers."

"Sufferers?"

Captain Morton could not but glance around him, upon all the material signs of prosperity and happiness which that costly apartment exhibited.

"Alas, sir!" added Lady Clifford, who saw the action, "it is not the glitter of worldly prosperity that will bring peace to the poor, wounded heart."

"No—no," said the admiral.

"I know it," said Captain Morton.

"You know it, sir?"

"Oh, yes, yes; and if you, admiral, and you, madam, will bear with me a little time, I would fain ask your advice and your aid in a matter that lies very near to my heart."

"Pray speak, sir," said the admiral; "we will be all attention. And it will only give us pleasure to aid you."

In a faltering voice, Captain Morton spoke:

"Ten years ago my little daughter, then a mere child, sailed from America in the ship *Sarah Ann*. From that time until to-night I have not seen her."

"To-night, sir?"

"Yes, admiral. I will tell you all."

Captain Morton then, from first to last, related to Admiral Sir Thomas Clifford what, fragmentally, is already well known to the reader, regarding the *Sarah Ann* and the fate of his child.

Toward the end of his narrative, Captain Morton was very much affected; and so seemed to be Sir Thomas Clifford, for he rose and paced the room with disordered steps.

And when Captain Morton had told all, down to the death of the smuggler and the appearance of the young girl with the basket, whom he now believed veritably to be his long lost daughter—the admiral paused by his chair, and in a voice of deep emotion, he said:

"I, too—I, too, am a bereaved father!"

"You, sir?"

"I am—I am!"

The admiral sat down, and rocked to and fro, as he covered his face with his hands.

"My boy—my boy! My own boy! Oh, my poor boy!"

Lady Clifford trembled, but she did not weep—she did not speak.

"I grieve much," said Captain Morton, "that in detailing my own grief, I have unwittingly touched a chord which vibrates with yours, sir, and yours, madam."

"It is accidental," said Lady Clifford.

"Quite—quite," said the admiral.

"Still I am very sorry."

"Oh, say not so, sir! I will aid you to the utmost of my power in this matter, and be assured that the young girl you have seen will soon be restored to you; for it is quite evident she cannot reside far from here. I would to Heaven we had as good a hope in regard to our own long-lost son."

"Alas! alas!" sighed Lady Clifford.

"And you have lost a son?"

"Yes, Captain Morton—yes. Shall I tell the captain, my dear?"

"Yes."

"It is now twelve years ago, sir, that our son—then about four years of age—was on the beach beneath the cliffs, with his nurse, who no more than ourselves dreamed of danger to him, when a boat, manned by four men, ran onto the shingle, and, without a word, seized upon the child, and carried him off."

"Off to sea?"

"Yes. Our coast has such numerous indentations, headlands, and bays, that they were lost to sight in ten minutes; and when the nurse recovered from the blow that had been given her, and from her fright, nothing could be seen of the boat, the men, or the child, by her or by several other persons who, on hearing her cries had flown to her aid, too late to prevent the act."

"It is very sad."

"And now, sir, we have told you all."

"And for all this time, has there been no news of your lost one?"

"None—none."

"Be hopeful yet, admiral, and you, madam; for up to the time when this obscure paragraph

that I have read to you met my eyes, I had no hope."

"Ah! there is no such good fortune in store for us."

"Nay—do not say that. Who shall say it, and with a knowledge sufficient to substantiate it?"

"You are very kind, Captain Morton, to try to give us hope, and we would fain cherish it. I will, however, now go at once with you to one of our most active magistrates, and see what can be done to help you in the recovery of your daughter."

"A thousand thanks, Sir Thomas Clifford!"

It was now about half-past ten, and Captain Morton began to entertain a notion that he ought to say something which should put off until the morning the proceedings in regard to his long-lost child; but the pleadings and the yearnings of the father's heart got the better of all such considerations.

"Tell me, Sir Thomas," he said; "am I not wrong to take you from your house at this time? Am I wrong and selfish, Lady Clifford?"

"Not at all, sir—not at all. I would myself beg Sir Thomas to go."

"Oh! it's quite right," said the admiral.

"The night is still early; and if it were an hour later, the gentleman I am about to take you to would think nothing of being disturbed in such a case as this. Ben, get a lantern; I am going to Mr. Justice Hilton's."

"Ay, ay, sir."

Ben was soon ready with his lantern, for the streets of the old town of Falmouth at that period were only lighted by a few very precarious oil-lamps, which generally went out at the first gust of wind.

Ben went before, to show the way; and as the admiral and Captain Morton followed, the former said:

"I don't know how it is, except that I suppose it is always a relief to tell the story of our griefs to any one; but I am certainly easier in my mind since I have spoken to you about my lost son."

"I am glad to hear that."

"Thank you. And what is more strange is, that a feeling of hope has come over me, such as I have never before experienced on the subject."

"Then I am more happy still."

"My own idea of the fate of my poor boy was, that he had been kidnapped to the plantations, as they are called; for such things have been done. But now I feel as if I had a hope of looking in his face again."

"It is a blessed hope."

"West by south," said Ben.

"This way," said the admiral. "You cannot expect, Ben, that Captain Morton is to follow you by compass."

"All right, admiral; but it is west by south. Here we are, at the gate."

"This is the magistrate's, my dear sir; and again I assure you that from him you will receive every possible attention."

It was at this moment that the report of a gun in the offing echoed through the town.

"Some arrival, Ben?" said the admiral.

"Yes, sir. There she is."

A brilliant blue-light at sea now let them see, from the rising ground on which they stood, the schooner *Spray*, making her way toward the harbor.

"Who is she, Ben?"

"Why, admiral, that's the schooner that has been sent out after the smuggler."

"Ah! the *Rift*. Yes. I asked for a schooner to be commissioned to hunt down one of the most daring smugglers and—I think I may add—pirates that has ever infested our coast. He calls his cutter the *Rift*."

"I have met with her, I think, sir."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; some sixty or eighty miles across the Channel, and I saw the schooner likewise."

"Bang! went another gun."

"There she comes, sir," said Ben, "with her best foot foremost; and, I should say, she has done her work."

"Has she a prize with her?"

"No, sir."

"Then the *Rift* has escaped."

"Or else she has gone down—do you see, sir—for them pirates don't like being taken, and would rather go down in blue water than be hauled up to the yard-arm any day; and I don't, for one, blame them for that, either."

The *Spray* fired a third gun; and then the white sails of a pilot-boat were seen glimmering over the sea as it went to meet her to bring her in.

"Well, well," said the admiral. "I shall know all about that in the morning; for whoever is in command of the schooner is to report to me."

"Ay, ay, sir," said Ben. "She's had a brush with the rogues."

"Indeed?"

"Lord bless you, sir, yes! I can see she has been hit, and her foremast is spliced."

"Then I hope for the best, as regards that terror of the coast, the *Rift*; so, now, for my friend the magistrate."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SMUGGLERS' HOME IN THE CLIFF.

WE pause a moment in the human action of our narrative, and allow those suffering hearts and yearning affections we have placed before our readers a temporary rest, while we depict a scene which it is necessary for the due comprehension of some strange incidents of our history should be well understood.

It is to the home—or the haunt, as both he and his lawless crew called it—of Dolan, the smuggler and pirate, that we would take our way.

Already are our readers familiar with that little bay and its far-outstretching promontories—land-locked almost as it was—bounded southward by the heaving seas of the English Channel—northward, by the tall beetling cliff.

At about a quarter of a mile distant from the tallest portion of the cliff, there had been one of those land-slips so common round the coast of England; and, amid the fallen mass which had, in picturesque confusion, made a varied scene of hill and dale, there nestled, looking onto the beach, some half dozen fishermen's cottages.

One of those cottages belonged to Dolan, the master and owner of the *Rift*. There, ostensibly, he carried on the trade of a fisherman; and there was rather an ostentatious display of black-looking nets hanging over the fence of the neglected garden. A couple of well-formed and perfectly seaworthy boats, though, were drawn up onto the beach, in front of the cottage.

It was not often that smoke curled up from the rude chimney of Dolan's supposed home; and it was not often that the door swung freely on its hinges. "Not at home," would have been the general answer of the very old woman, who was usually nearly bent double with decrepitude, crawling about the place.

But there were times when Dolan found it politic and necessary to affect to sit down by his own hearth; and then that woman, whom we have already seen and heard endeavoring to exercise a control over Grace, would be there; and there would be the affected bustle of a little housewife.

The other cottages—hovels they might be called—were occasionally in the occupation of various members of Dolan's gang of desperadoes. In fact, this pretended little group of fishermen's dwellings was but a blind, to be used occasionally by Dolan, and some of his crew, to account for their being in or about that spot at all.

A narrow road led from this cluster of cottages into a high-road that went direct to the town.

At the top of this narrow road was a little, low, whitewashed dwelling, in which resided a man with a wooden leg, who pretended to live by making nets, and those lumpy combinations of ropes and oakum by which partial collisions between the fishing cutters were staved off and rendered innocuous.

This old man, though, had hanging in his but a very curious old horn, with many twists and convolutions, such as one sees occasionally in some old French print of sportsmen, in some of the ancient forests of that land of political mutations; and when any strange footsteps wandered down toward the beach, past his cottage, he would blow on this odd-shaped horn three toots, which, in a strange way, would echo about the cliff and the land-slip.

But it is not with the cluster of chance fishermen's cottages that we have now to do. It is away from the light of day—away from the dancing sunlight, the scudding clouds, and the deep green sea, that we would conduct our readers.

Daily lighted by a huge old lamp, suspended by a heavy chain, from a hook buried deeply in the chalk ceiling, there is a huge, irregularly-shaped cavern. Take it altogether, its superficial area must have been some thousand of feet, although the many irregularities of its shape, and the deep indentations that made up its full dimensions, presented the effect of the huge actual size being appreciated.

The walls were green and moss-grown in some cases. Flintstones and fossils of many different varieties projected from the chalky rock, and the ceiling, which was an irregular dome overhead, presented many jagged masses, which seemed ready at any moment to fall upon the floor below, or upon the head of any one who might be in the cavern.

Blackened was that ceiling by smoke, and, in some cases, where a fire of logs had been kindled against the wall of the cavern, the flames and the smoke had gone right up to the ceiling, crackling, clarring and blackening the chalk in a singular fashion.

There were leading to and from this huge cavern many cuttings or openings—jagged and uneven—some tall and narrow—others of a nearly circular shape, which it would require some stooping and some skill to pass through; and, throughout the whole, there was at times a rushing, moaning sound, as the wind from the bay forced its way through the masses and hollows of the cliff.

This cavern, then, occupied a good portion of the center of the huge cliff we have spoken of.

By narrow, tortuous passages, which required

care to ascend them, other minor caverns could be reached, as well as various look-out places on small plateaux in the face of the cliff, where a human being would have looked, from seaward, like a piece of fluttering weed, or some bird prowling about the face of the cliff.

This, then, was the real home of Dolan, the smuggler, and of his lawless crew. It was reached in two ways; there was a secret passage to it from the gorge in the cliff; there was another passage to it from the bay.

A very rugged kind of flight of steps—broad and steep—for they had been only roughly cut down the steep declivity of a natural passage—led from this huge cavern to the level of the sea in the bay, but still within the cliff, and there was a black-looking pool of sea-water—a subterranean lake of about three hundred yards across—and which only slightly heaved to and fro on its surface, as it sympathized with the swell of the water in the bay, with which it had communication.

Torches stuck in different parts of the cliff around this sea lake gave a sort of twilight appearance to the place, and showed a roof about a hundred feet in height from its surface.

On this lake, with an idle motion—stem and stern—rested the *Rift*.

Dark-looking boats were silently rowed over the surface of this inland piece of water, and now and then there was a hoarse cry from some human voice, as an order was given or responded to, the echoes of which would die away in strange gibbering noises through the old caverns.

How the *Rift* got into this place, the reader already knows. At night, boat-load after boat-load would issue out of the cavern, and make for the beach by the land-slip, where there would be plenty of assistance to carry them off to a safe market somewhere inland.

And now we resume the thread of our narrative.

Pale and trembling, Dolan stood on the deck of the *Rift*, and the faint light from the torches of the sea-cavern fell upon his restless eyes. There was a wildness of expression about the face of Dolan that he had never worn before.

There was a quiver of the muscles about the mouth; an uneasy, restless searching here and there about the eyes; and, now and then, a short, sharp, sudden turn of the head, as though he expected something that it would be terrible to see was close to him, and, with more than mortal rapidity, likely to glide behind his back on his attempt to see it.

Truly, the imagination of Dolan was in anything but a beautiful state.

It was the vision in the cabin of the *Rift* that had been the proximate cause of this mental condition on the part of the smuggler and pirate.

It was with a great effort that he roused himself to action; and, although there was craven fear at his heart, he strove to speak in his usual tone.

"Now, my men," he shouted, "look alive. The *Rift* has beaten off the *Spray*, and in our old home in the cliff, we may yet defy all the power that can be brought against us. Bustle now, my men. We have a full cargo, and the night will be just the one for us. No moon, I take it, Martin?"

"None till the twenty-fifth," said Martin, shortly, and, as Dolan thought, with an expression very different, from that in which he usually spoke.

Dolan would fain have asked what change had come over him, but he dreaded now to do so, lest the reply should be one that would increase his fear.

Then, from the various deep indentations of the sea-cavern, issued boats, and they surrounded the *Rift*. It was into these boats that the cargo was to be stowed, and then, in some secure hour of the night, they were to be rowed out of the bay, and round the promontory, to the group of cottages in the supposed occupation of fishermen, but the real tenancy of Dolan and his crew.

When there, they would be met by an agent, who would buy all the goods, and take all further risk attendant upon them.

This agent, though, knew nothing of the secret caverns in the cliff.

"Look sharp!" cried Dolan, with an affectation of firmness, although his voice cracked as he spoke, and several of the crew started, for they could scarcely at the moment recognize it—"look sharp! for all must be done to-night, and there is no time to lose."

"Ay, ay, sir," growled one, "I don't think there is, now as we have fired on a king's ship."

"Who is that?"

"Me—Job Lines. Here I am."

"What did you mean?"

"Just what I said, Captain Dolan, which was, that there was no time to lose! 'Hoy! shipmates—'hoy! No time to lose!'"

At these words from this man a ringing shout rung through the cavern, and the work of unloading the *Rift* was at once suspended as by a common agreement among the men, for which those words were the signal.

"What is this?" shouted Dolan.

"Oh, there will be no harm, captain."

"Mutiny!"

"We don't know the word here. There is no time to lose, mates, is there?"

"None!" shouted the crew.

"What is it? What is it? Are you all mad?"

"No," said one, standing up in one of the boats, "but we should be, if we went on in this kind of way any longer. It was all very well before a king's ship was in commission against us, and before we fired on her. We were smugglers, so far as they knew; and, if caught, why the worst that would have befallen us would have been that we should have been clapped on board a man-of-war; but, now—now, my mates—now—"

"It's the yard-arm!" they all cried.

"Ay, it is."

"What do you mean? What do you want?" said Dolan. "I do not understand you. I share with you all perils—perhaps more than any of you know of. What do you want then of me? What can I do?"

"Share and share alike; and let this be the last venture!"

"Ah!"

"Yes, the last; no more of it! Let each go on his own cruise; and there's an end. And now we want to know when the division of the spoil takes place and where?"

"To-morrow night, and here!" promptly cried Captain Dolan.

"That will do."

"But, until then, my men, unless you consent to one thing, I will at once leave the cavern."

"What is that? What thing?"

"Obey me cheerfully and promptly, as you have been in the habit of doing; for I work for the good of all."

"Yes, yes," cried all present, "that will do."

"Now to work."

There was universal activity immediately; and Dolan was still standing by the cabin, when he heard a voice cry out:

"Gerald! Gerald! Brother—brother Gerald! Oh, speak to me, dear! Where are you?"

Standing, like the image of a saint, in a little niche of the cavern, that overhung the water, and which communicated to its surface by some wide steps, and in the other direction of the upper cave, where we first introduced the reader to the secret haunt of the smugglers, was Grace. Her light dress and beautiful hair swayed gently in a puffy kind of wind that circled round the sides of the cavern, and her voice, like a strain of music, echoed from roof to rock, and was deflected in a strange echo from the inland sea.

"Gerald! Gerald! Where are you, Gerald?"

"Silence!" roared Captain Dolan. "What do you do here? How dare you come hither?"

"For Gerald!"

"Away with you!"

"No—no. Gerald—I want Gerald! Who will tell me of him? Oh, will none of you speak to me?"

"All right, Miss Grace," said one.

"Gerald, do you mean? Is he here? I do not see him."

"Take the girl away! This is men's work here!" cried Dolan. "Take her away some of you!"

"No—no! You have killed him—I know you have! I am sure you have killed him! You, Dolan, you!"

Grace uttered these words in the midst of tears and shrieks; and Dolan then cried out savagely:

"Is that the way to speak to a father?"

"Father? Father?" she said. "Oh, no—no—no father! I have no father; Gerald has no father. Oh, no, no; a father is a something so kind, so good, so full of affection and gentleness to his children; while you—you, Dolan—oh, I do not want to be wicked—but you are cruel to us; and you have killed poor Gerald."

There was a sudden splash then in the dark waters of the cavern, and an oath from Dolan, and a scream from Grace followed the plunge into the waves of Gerald from the cabin window.

"Stop him! Fire at him!" shouted Dolan. "I will!"

"No you won't," said Martin, as he struck up the arm of Dolan; and as the pistol exploded, and the bullet struck off a piece of rock from the roof of the cavern, there was a murmur of disapprobation from the crew.

Gerald swam toward the steps that led up to where Grace was standing, and the girl ran down them, slippery and slimy as they were, and with little cries of joy welcomed him, and helped him from the water.

"Gerald, dear, you are well—you are not killed? Oh, I am so glad to see you, dear Gerald; and he would kill you now—now, even. Oh, it is so dreadful! That man is not our father—he cannot be. We have no father, Gerald!"

Grace clung to the dripping form of Gerald with frantic eagerness; and then the boy turned and faced Dolan.

"Coward!" he said. "Murderous coward!"

"Ah! You dare!"

"Yes, I dare. You would have killed me now—you fain would take my life. You are a coward, Dolan, and you are a villain!"

A suppressed kind of yell came from the crew; and then Dolan spoke aloud:

"As regards shooting the boy, I had no such intention! It is for you, my men, whom he would have given up and betrayed to the authorities, to consider how far he merits your good offices. If you choose to take into favor the spy, the traitor, the boy who has learned to write that he might betray you all, I am content—have your own way."

"There is no occasion," said one, "to shoot the boy."

"The pistol went off by accident. If Martin had let my arm be, it would not have done so."

"That may be true, mates," said Martin.

"And as for shooting the boy," added Dolan—and the dark, malignant look came over his face in double terror—"as for shooting the boy, I would not so balk myself by doing so for all my share of the plunder and profit of all our cruises. Oh! he is very safe with me."

Gerald and Grace had now reached the top of the little slippery steps together, and there was some apparent intention on the part of Grace, in the excitement of the moment, to say something to Dolan, but Gerald stopped her.

"No, dear, no! Oh! do not."

"I will not say a word, dear Gerald."

"That is well. I have so much to tell you, dear."

"And you are safe? You are not hurt, Gerald? You will not go again from me?"

"No—no! But we will soon leave this place, dear. To-night! to-night!"

"Oh joy—joy!"

"We must to-night, but not alone!"

"Not alone, Gerald?"

"No, not alone! On board the Rift, dear, there is another—one whom you will love—one who will love you so dearly, my dear Grace. This way. Come this way. We will go into the dry cavern, dear. This way."

"Yes, Gerald; but who is the one? Who will love me, as you say, and go with us?"

"Oh, Grace, dear, I have such a terrible story to tell you!"

"Once for all!" shouted Captain Dolan, at this moment, from the deck of the Rift—"once for all, I warn you, crew of the Rift, that if you let that boy escape from this place, your lives are not worth twenty-four hours' purchase, for he will go at once to the Port Admiral and betray all."

These words produced an evident commotion, and the rough voice of the second in command was heard issuing an order.

"A couple of men on a cruise in the bay! You, Jakes, and you, Peter!"

"Ay, ay!"

"Who holds watch in the ravine?" said Dolan.

"Andrews."

"John or his brother?"

"John," said a voice.

"Well, my men, look to it! Look to it! That is all I say to you—look to it!"

"Ay—ay! we will do that!"

"But he is my son, you know; and I can't ask you to anything to my own flesh and blood!"

There was no reply to this. But for an uneasy sensation on the minds of the men, that after all there was a something in the whole transaction in regard to Gerald and that letter which Dolan had affected to produce, there could be no doubt but that their rage against the boy would have been quite sufficient to insure his destruction.

Now, as Gerald was very anxious to escape, these precautions were most inimical to his happiness, and plunged both him and Grace into a sea of wild conjecture as to what would happen to them, and very vague projects of deliverance.

The reader is aware, though, that Gerald has other cares upon his mind as well as those connected with Grace.

That gentle and fair daughter of Captain Mocquet—that being whom he had certainly rescued from death, had become very dear to him, and had, insensibly to him, wound herself closely about his heart.

And yet poor Gerald felt as if he were guilty of some treason against his proper and just affections, as now Grace held him in her arms and kissed his lips, and sobbed out her joy at seeing him.

"Dear Gerald—come now and sit by me—oh! no, no, you are so wet, you will go and get dry clothes, and then you will come to me. I have so much to say to you. Come soon—so very soon; dear Gerald!"

"I will, dear."

Gerald did come soon. He, too, had much to say; and his anxiety to say it was so great, that he trembled in every limb, and more than once was on the point of allowing his pent-up feeling the relief of tears.

There was a pretty nook in the chalk cavern, where hung some rich tapestries that once Dolan had brought home from a wreck, he said. It was indeed from a wreck he had brought them, but it was a wreck of his own making; and in that recess these two young

and artless beings sat hand in hand; and while they heard the wash of the water in the sea-cavern, and occasionally the hoarse sound of some order, they held council together.

"Grace, dear, I have said to you that there was another."

"Yes, Gerald."

"Whom you must love."

"You love—the other?"

"No, yes—that is, no—not as I love you, Grace—not the same—oh! no—no!"

"Who is the other, dear Gerald?"

"Marie Mocquet. I will tell you all. Oh! dear Grace, you will be so glad to hear it all, and you will be so kind, and so good to her. I am sure you will!"

"Yes, dear."

Grace rested her head upon the shoulder of Gerald and then he, in a voice of deep emotion told her all the particulars of that, to him, terrible cruise in the Rift; and how he had at the risk of his own life, rescued from the sea the young French girl; and how she had terrified Dolan; and how, even then, she was in the cabin of the Rift, hiding; and how her father, Captain Mocquet, was there a prisoner, whom he (Gerald) much feared Dolan meant ill to. And Grace listened to it all, and when he ceased to speak, and had told all, she clasped him close to her, and in a voice that was so low, you might have supposed it to be the first faint twitter of a young bird, she said to him:

"My Gerald—my dear Gerald—I will love her. It was a great and gallant thing to do. God will bless you, Gerald!"

"And you, too, my dear Grace. You will not be, that is, you do not feel—"

She turned away her head slightly and then she said:

"No! no!"

She did not ask him what she should not be, or what she should not feel, but that gentle "no" answered him; and he clasped her closer to his breast, and kissed her tenderly.

"Now, dear," he said, "what shall we do?—what can we do? We must be so prompt and so energetic. You, dear Grace, who are so clever, will think of what to do."

"Escape, dear Gerald; we must escape soon. Each moment is full of danger now. It is you, Gerald, who are clever; you who know the most, and will be able to tell me what to do."

"Would that I could, dear!"

"Grace! Grace!" cried a harsh voice at this moment.

"That is Mrs. Wagner."

"Hush!"

There was the flash of a light; and the woman, who was in the confidence of Captain Dolan, and who had endeavored to assume a control over Grace, appeared before them.

CHAPTER XIV.

CAPTAIN MORTON VISITS THE BAY.

We left Captain Morton, of the Nautilus yacht, in the honest and sympathizing society of Admiral Clifford. Between them had sprung up a friendly feeling, such as was more than likely to unite men of equal generosity of soul. As they listened to the guns from the Spray, which announced her entrance into port, each seemed to look at the other, as if he would say:

"Those sounds are interesting in some way to both of us, because they will be interesting, certainly, to one."

But a great change was about to take place in the mode of proceeding of the two officers in their search for the daughter of Captain Morton—a change which no longer in any way necessitated an appeal to that assistance which the admiral had suggested.

That change was brought about in this way: During the slight pause that ensued while they listened to the guns of the Spray in the offing, a miserable-clad woman came up to the admiral, and put into his hand a folded paper, which he at once, without opening, returned to her, with a shilling on the top of it, as he said:

"My good woman, I dare say it is all here, and you are very badly off. But I am not able to give more, because I am forced to give so often."

"I do not want charity," she said.

"Then what is it?"

"Read that, sir."

The admiral opened the letter, and read the following words:

"If ever it should happen, while I am away on a cruise, that any inquiry is made about either of the children, it will be safer to make away with them, than allow any one to get them from you. I have, as you know, full confidence in you, and although, of course, the girl is of very little consequence to me and my project, compared with the boy, still I will not have her go, and I would rather hear that she was dead, than that she had got away. Besides she knows too much now, and is clever far beyond her years, as you well know. Take her to the cave at once, on the least alarm, and do not let her stir till it is so completely over that there can be no danger. There is, however, not much chance of any stir being made about her, since the American ship was never spoken of, and I believe that she was the only living soul saved from it. So now, Wagner, I beg you to be very discreet indeed. I will take Gerald with me

next cruise, and that will be the last, as I hear the Port Admiral is on the lookout for the Rift. I send this by Bowline, who will call at the cottage to see you about other matters."

"What is all this about?" said Admiral Clifford.

"You have read it," said the woman.

"I have."

"Then read it to me, sir."

The admiral did so; and then the woman clapped her hands and said:

"That is it, I know now. That's what makes madam such a fine lady, that she can't so much as say, 'sit down,' to her poor sister. I thought as much!"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, that my sister, Mrs. Wagner, is carrying on affairs for Captain Dolan, to be sure, of the Rift, and that this letter, which I put in my pocket when she was not looking, is from him, and means that the little girl is to be murdered some day if anybody comes to look after her. I only asked her for a few pounds to take me to Gibraltar, where my husband is—he's a soldier; but she turned me out of her cottage, and I saw this letter, so I brought it with me. And I know that Captain Dolan is a smuggler, and not a bit a fisherman."

"But what child—what little girl do you talk of?" said Captain Morton, with emotion.

"Oh! She told me about that long ago; it was saved from an American ship. She shan't turn her back on me for nothing. You had better, sir, as you are a great admiral, go and rout out Dolan; for I tell you he's a smuggler, and the Rift goes out smuggling—not fishing. And then there's an end to your airs and graces, Madam Wagner! Hoity-toity! indeed—not so much as 'you are welcome for a day or two, sister.'"

"Woman," cried Captain Morton, "you have said too much and too little."

"What do you mean, sir? You are hurting my arm."

"I do not mean to hurt you; but if you will answer me what I shall ask of you, I will give you the money you want to join your husband at Gibraltar."

"It's three pounds, sir."

"There are five. Now tell me where this Mrs. Wagner is to be found."

"In one of the cottages, sir, on the beach. In Dolan's cottage you will be sure to find her or Mrs. Green."

"Mrs. Green—who is she?"

"Oh! very old, indeed. She minds the cottage while Mrs. Wagner is away."

"Away where?"

"That she never would tell me. But I know that she, and Dolan, and all the smugglers have got somewhere to go to that they can hide in, and where nobody can find them."

"But the child—the girl!" cried Captain Morton; "what of her?"

"Well, sir, I don't know anything more of her, but that she is with Mrs. Wagner."

"You saw her, then?"

Captain Morton's voice was almost choked by emotion.

"To be sure."

"And she was—that is, was she very beautiful, with fair hair, inclined to auburn, and long lashes? She—she had a very sweet smile—so light, so gentle; and her eyes—something sad about the eyes, I think."

"Well, I think yes; and I saw the corals."

"The what?—the corals?—a necklace. Bracelets—jagged, natural corals that the child wore when the ship was wrecked. The snaps were rough Indian gold."

"Yes, I saw them, and a fan made of feathers, which was found in a box that came ashore after the wreck, Mrs. Wagner said."

Captain Morton leaned heavily upon the arm of the admiral, as in accents of deep emotion he said:

"My child! my child!—my own dear little one! At once—at once I will go. I ask for no help—for no assistance; for I feel that there is danger to my darling's life. I shall now seek her alone, admiral. This cottage, I will go to at once; she may be there. I know the cottage on the beach; I will seek her there now—on the moment."

"Stay," said the admiral. "The cottages you speak of are not those you will have to seek. A boat will be your best conveyance to those in the occupation of the fishermen. I have heard of this man Dolan."

"Yes, my dear friend. God bless you for all your help and sympathy! A boat! I will go in a boat at once."

"Avast heaving, admiral!" said the sailor. "Here's Captain Grey and some of his quarter-deck big guns, sir."

"Captain Grey? Oh! Captain the Honorable Minto Grey!" said the admiral, with a slightly perceptible smile. "We shall hear something now of the cruise of the Spray."

The captain of the Spray had landed, and was, with a look of intense ennui, slowly approaching where stood Admiral Clifford and Captain Morton. The lieutenant of the Spray was close to his captain. When sufficiently near to do so with effect, the Honorable Minto Grey put up to his eye—where he at once fixed

it, by muscular contraction—a glass, and took a good look at the admiral.

"Pon life!" he said, "it's the old commodore."

"Yes, sir—the Port Admiral," said the lieutenant.

"What a Providence—seems no end of bother. Well, admiral, that's over. Sunk the Rift."

"Sunk her!"

"Oa, yes! Rather a low affair, ah! To London, now, fast as post-horses can take me."

"Sunk the Rift, have you, Captain Grey?"

"Oh, yes! It's in the log."

"Ob!"

"Yes, ah. Quite a trouble, but it's in the log. Where's the log, Mr. Green—eh? The log."

"Here, sir."

"Oh! Well, let the admiral have the log. Haul down my flag on board the Spray. I'm off. Good-day, admiral—by-by! Ah, what a fatigue! That's over."

The Honorable Minto Grey strolled slowly away, leaving the lieutenant with the ship's log-book in his hands, which he had taken from a sailor who had followed with it from the boat.

"The puppy!" said Admiral Clifford.

The lieutenant coughed.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir! You look, sir, as if there were some mystery in this affair. What is it?"

"The log-book, admiral, states that the Rift is sunk, under fire from the guns of the Spray."

"Well, sir, I suppose there can be no mistake about that?"

"I hope not, admiral; but if you will permit me to go on board the Spray again, and continue the cruise, I shall feel greatly indebted to you, sir."

The admiral bit his lip.

"Now, is not this too bad?" he said. "I ask for a vessel on a special mission, and they give me one with such a commander as—that!"

The admiral pointed to the retreating, lounging figure of the Honorable Minto Grey, who was making his way to the principal hotel.

"Very well, sir," added the admiral. "Then go on board the Spray, and take the command, as from me. Do your duty, sir. It is not for me to do so serious a thing as question the log-book of Captain Grey; but go, you sir, and do your duty."

The lieutenant bowed.

"I shall be glad to have a report from you, sir, whenever you please; and if you want any stores, you can have them, sir."

"We want nothing, sir; and I have the honor to bid you good morning, sir!"

"Good-morning! Captain Morton! Eh?—what!"

"Went off, admiral, in full sail," said the sailor-servant. "Clapped on ever such a lot of extra canvas when he got to the corner, and went before the wind, sir."

"And that woman—where is she?"

"Nor-nor-west, sir. Tacked up Albion street, sir, and got somehow into port; for I didn't see no more of her."

"Well, well. No doubt we shall soon hear something more of Captain Morton. He seems a noble fellow."

"As true a seaman, admiral, as ever stepped between stem and stern. There, sir—there lies his little craft, the Nautilus, sir. Ain't she ship-shape? Hilloa!"

There was evidently some movement on board the Nautilus. In another moment, as if some sea-bird had spread its wings, a streak of snow-white canvas fluttered aloft. Then a small boat might have been seen dancing over the water. Captain Morton was going on board his yacht.

At the same moment, another boat was, at an angle from that one, making for the Spray, which had not dropped her anchor, but stood off and on in the roads.

Lieutenant Green was going to take his new command.

Bang! went a gun from the Nautilus; and the admiral accepted the salute as a "good day to you, dear friend!" from Captain Morton.

"Good fortune attend him!" he said. "He is a gallant fellow."

The Stars and Stripes flew out from the Nautilus; and she went on her way, like a sea-bird, toward the cottages that had been indicated as those in which Dolan and Mrs. Wagner had their abode.

CHAPTER XV.

NIGHT AT THE SMUGGLERS' CAVERN.

THE sun has sunk again on the long line of swell of the western sea.

Within the sea-cave some strange scenes had taken place—scenes which it will be our duty to relate, and which had occupied much of the time since last we looked upon Dolan, on the deck of his vessel.

The smuggler and pirate felt that his authority was no longer of the character that it had been among the lawless men he commanded; and he had an appreciation of the necessity for conciliation.

It was, then, with such an idea that he called

aloud to the crew of the Rift, after the departure of Gerald from the vessel:

"Forward, all hands—forward! I have a something to say which may be for the good of all."

The boats, loaded with the plunder from the Coquette, were idly floating on the sea in the cavern. They were lashed together with a space of about twenty feet between each, and were all ready to sail out into the bay; and, when Dolan thus spoke, the men stood up by the shrouds, and there was a cry of "Silence, there, fore and aft!"

"You know, my men," said Dolan, "that we have a prisoner on board the Rift, and you all know who that prisoner is?"

"Ay, ay—the French captain!"

"Yes; the French captain. Now, my men, Captain Mocquet knows, by this time, a great deal about us, and, as Captain Mocquet is a rich man! There can be no doubt but that, if we set a handsome value on his life, he would pay it."

The crew were silent. They did not fully comprehend the scope of Dolan's remarks.

"I mean," he added, "that if we let him go free, we ought to be paid, and, as we are about to separate, and to give up this little confederation—as you are all about to leave me, each taking his share of the plunder, and the profit of our cruises, why, such profit may as well be increased by a good round sum from the Frenchman. I propose, then, that he be offered his life for a hundred thousand francs!"

"How much is that?" growled one.

"Five thousand pounds!"

Several of the crew whistled.

"Well, if you think it too much, I propose, then," said Dolan, "that Captain Mocquet be offered his life for fifty thousand francs—death, if he refuses! Who says ay to that?"

"Ay, ay!" cried several voices.

"Come on board, all of you," said Dolan. "It is one for all now; and all for one. Let the boat drift."

One of the boats was made fast to a ring-bolt in the side of the cavern, and the rest were let float about, attached to it by the tow-ropes, how they pleased.

"Bring him up," said Dolan. "Off with the main hatch!"

The order was obeyed; and then Dolan slowly crept away from the hatchway; for he knew not but that the first object that might meet his gaze would be the fair young face of that (as he believed) drowned girl, who had terrified him in the cabin.

"Aho!" cried Bowline, down the hatchway.

"Come up, you mounseer. Come up, will you? Aho!"

No one came.

"Very good," said Dolan; "go and fetch him."

"I am here!" said Captain Mocquet, looking pale and wan as he appeared above the hatchway—"I am here. What for to go do you want of me?"

"Close the hatch," said Dolan.

The hatch was closed, and then Captain Mocquet uttered a kind of sigh of relief. His heart was in the cabin of the Rift with his darling child.

"What want you at me?"

"Look you here, Captain Mocquet," said Dolan, "you are in our hands; you know now the secret of our cavern—at least, you will be able to guess it. You are dangerous to us. In a word, then, Captain Mocquet, we intend to hang you. Do you comprehend that?"

The French captain slightly bowed his head, and said:

"Mais, I smuggle; but when I smuggle I do not cut de throat—coupez la—Bibi! bab! I will promise, parole d'honneur, I will not say of this place, or of anything; but I will go free, and I will have no more to deal with the Rift."

"That won't do," said Dolan.

Captain Mocquet shrugged his shoulders, and his hand shook as it rested on the hatchway.

"Listen, now!" added Dolan. "We intend to divide our gains, and to disperse. Pay us—give us an order on some one in France, and when we get the money for it—an order for fifty thousand francs—and I say when we get the money for it, you will be free."

"Ah, you disperse—you smuggle no more—and the Rift—the cutter—the Rift?"

"That we shall take to some port and sell."

The countenance of the French captain brightened up, but his hand trembled still more, as he said hurriedly:

"Bien, you sell him. I buy—I buy of you all the Rift. I give you fifty thousand francs for the Rift, and for my life. I take him—I sail away with him. I say bon soir, messieurs—I say no more. I buy him, and give the order on the bank at Havre. I have spoke, mes amis. It shall be—eh? eh?"

"That's fair!" cried Martin.

"Merci! Merci!"

The Frenchman's lips quivered. He thought that if he could buy the Rift he might sail away with his daughter, and save her wholly from the hands of Dolan; for he had an awful dread that the villain might get the better of his fright on reflection, and go below and find that the

supposed supernatural Marie was a thing of life.

"That's fair!" cried Martin, again.

"No," said Dolan, "I won't part with the Rift."

Mocquet's countenance fell.

"She's mine," added Dolan.

"Oh, no—no! Dieu merci! No—no!"

"Why, what's the matter with you now?" growled Bowline. "The rope is not round your neck yet, mounseer."

"You will not sell to me the cutter?"

"No; I will not sell the cutter to any one," said Dolan, "at present. I will take no other thought about that; and if I do sell her, it will be for more than you say. You offer nothing."

"Rien! nothing!"

"Nothing. The fifty thousand francs are for your life. You offer nothing for the cutter."

"Ah, I see. I shall give—what shall I give? I shall give fifty thousand more for the cutter."

"That's a good offer," said Bowline.

Dolan was silent.

"Hark you, captain," said Martin, "that's fair, and my mates right and left of me think it so. They fancy it will be a good round sum to divide among us, along with what you have got to get us as well."

"Be it so," said Dolan, briefly.

A flush of color came to the face of Mocquet, and clutching the hatchway, he said:

"Then he is mine—mine, and no one dare—no one shall go! Hush! Bahl! I shall say too much. I will buy him, then, one hundred thousand francs for life and the Rift?"

"Yes."

"I shall write one order; and I shall promise that one seal is on my lips—one seal."

"What does he mean?" said Bowline.

"He means that he will be secret," said Dolan.

"Oui—yes—secret. I will never—never say one word of this place, nor of the cruises of the Rift—never—never!"

"Lights closer here!" cried Dolan.

Several flaming flambeaux were now brought close to the little group on the deck of the cutter, and Dolan, turning to Bowline, said:

"Go below; in my cabin you will find pens, and ink, and paper."

"Ay, ay."

"I saw him!" shrieked Mocquet. "I saw him, sacre Dieu! I saw him myself!"

"Saw who?"

"One pen—one ink—one paper. I will bring him all up. I, myself. Let me—oh, let me!"

"Why, he's out of his mind," said Bowline.

"Look how he shakes, and how white he looks. One would think, mates, he had hid something down below that he was afraid some of us would see."

Captain Mocquet laughed, and descended the hatchway, which he had himself opened, and Dolan and the crew of the Rift looked at each other in surprise, at the amount of strange emotion exhibited by the Frenchman.

"I say," whispered Bowline to one next him, "these Frenchmen, I don't think, are quite right in their wits when anything goes a little wrong with them."

"I should think not."

"Here he is!" cried Captain Mocquet, appearing on the deck with a rush that made Dolan start two steps backward. In his hands he had writing materials, which he eagerly placed on the capstan.

"Here he is. I shall write one order. There! One hundred thousand francs. He is done; and liberty and the Rift is mine—eh?"

"Yes," said Dolan, as he took the order, "as soon as we have the money for this."

"The money?"

"Yes; you don't suppose that we are going to let you and the Rift go, just for this bit of paper, do you?"

Captain Mocquet had not supposed so, and he bowed and smiled, as he replied:

"It is well—so, so. I will stay on the Rift, and the cabin—the chief cabin—will be mine, and no one will come to him. That is arranged—eh, Capitaine Dolan?"

"That's fair," said Martin.

Captain Mocquet turned and made a low bow to Martin, who then said:

"But how are we to get the money?"

"I will go to Havre and get it for you all, said Dolan.

"And then?"

"Why, then I will divide it among you."

"But if we separate, all of us, to-morrow night, how are we to get the division made, mates, I should like to know?"

"I will meet you all on the Common Hard, at Portsmouth," said Dolan, "on this day week, or anywhere you like to name."

"Now, mates," added Martin, "I don't half like that way of doing things. We can't spare our captain, and I for one, don't want to go to the Common Hard at Portsmouth. I don't see the harm of staying here another week in the cavern, and I think the best person to go and get the money is Mocquet himself."

"Mocquet?" cried Dolan.

"For he's a Frenchman and can get on better—"

than you or any of us would. I think we ought to go off to Havre, and send him on shore to get the money. He will then, on coming back with it, be all right, and we can get landed on the English coast, and give him up the Rift. He can bring two or three Frenchmen on board with him, just to hold the cutter in hand, and then the whole affair will be right and ship-shape."

"Ay, ay!" cried the crew; "that's it."

"And so," said Dolan, sneeringly, "you think you would get Mocquet back again if you let him set his foot on shore."

"I will answer for him."

"You, Martin?"

"Yes, Captain Dolan; I will answer for him with my share of the plunder and profit, and with my life. Mates, will you take my word for it? You all know me?"

"Ay, ay!" shouted the men; "that will do."

"Very well," said Dolan, bitterly; "do what you please."

"And we will take care of the order for the hundred thousand francs," said Martin. "Eh, mates?"

"Yes, yes! That's it."

"Oh, my gallant crew!" sighed Dolan. "Do you doubt me? Perish the thought! We will have no doubt of each other. Captain Mocquet, when we are off Havre, can and will easily write another order for the money; and rather than this should be a bone of contention among us, let it perish. There! There!"

Captain Dolan drew from his pocket a slip of paper; and, in a moment, holding it in the flame of one of the lanterns, he consumed it, and it flared into tinder.

"Oh, indeed!" muttered Martin.

"And now, my men," added Dolan; "as that is all arranged and settled, and as we quite understand each other about that little piece of business, let us look to our other affairs. Is all the cargo shipped?"

"Ay, sir! Ay! ay!"

Dolan then blew a long, low note upon a silver whistle he took from his pocket, and a strange commotion immediately ensued in and about the sea-cavern. There was the creaking of pulley-blocks, and the flipping of canvas, and then a wild rush of cold air came howling and roaring from the open bay into the sea-cavern.

The canvas covering of the narrow, jagged entrance to that mysterious place had been removed.

"Silence all, now," said Dolan.

There was a profound sort of hush in the cavern, which seemed to be only the abode of the wind and the water.

"All lights out!"

Every lantern and torch was extinguished.

Then Dolan, just as the last light bled in the water, into which it was thrust as a ready extinguisher, went out, dropped by a rope from the deck of the Rift, into the foremost boat, and took the tiller-ropes in his hands.

"Pull away!" he said.

Six oars dipped into the water at once, and the boat shot slowly out into the bay. One rower only was in each of the other boats to give help to their progress, as they were all in a line. The sea-cavern was in the charge of four of the crew, and the remainder lolled about in the boats among the contraband goods that had been taken from the Coquette.

And so, right out in the little bay, went Dolan with his last venture of the Rift—half-piratical and half-smuggling as that venture was—and the boats pulled for the promontory to the east of the bay.

CHAPTER XVI.

INTRODUCES THE READER TO MR. SUFFLES.

THAT night in the Channel was what seamen call "dirty." In addition to a precarious kind of puffy wind, that succeeds, at times, to be quite undecided as to what point of the compass it would blow from, there was at times a cold, scattering mist, and the darkness was as profound as the most enthusiastic smuggler could possibly wish it to be.

The progress of the boats from the cavern was good, until the promontory was rounded, and then they found themselves in a chopping, uncertain sea, that rendered their movements difficult.

About a mile ahead of them—not above six or eight feet from the surface of the water—burned the solitary light, which had the faculty of presenting different colors to the observation of those at sea, at intervals.

The fact was that this light was inclosed in a lantern, the four sides of which had each a different colored glass—red, blue, yellow, and a very pale green. This lantern was mounted on a buoy, which was allowed to drift out into the sea at the end of a tow-line.

It was only a signal to the smugglers' boats.

"Keep it," said Dolan, in a low voice. "You see the light?"

"Ay, ay!"

"Starboard oars, easier there! That will do. Now, give way! That is over."

Dolan meant that the boat had got round the promontory sufficiently to be sheltered considerably by it; but the other boats were still,

so to speak, outside, and exposed to the full wash of the Channel sea.

A very few minutes, though, sufficed to bring them into the smoother water; and then, as the parti-colored lantern bobbed up and down on the waves, the boats in a line—there were four of them—like some black serpent—made their way to the beach.

That was the beach on which those sham-fishermen's cottages were situated.

Then Captain Dolan took from his pocket a little tin case, and from that a coiled-up match, which he refolded into a length of about twelve inches, and then, lighting the end, he held it up and waved it to and fro.

Rapidly, then, the parti-colored lantern was drawn through the water by its guide-rope, and extinguished on the beach.

"All's right," said Dolan, as he threw the remains of the match into the sea. "Easy, my men—easy."

He bent low to the tiller-ropes, and kept his eyes fixed on the shore. He was steering finely.

With a grating sound, then, the keel of the boat touched the light shingle and sand on the beach; and then Dolan threw aside the tiller-ropes, and sprang into the sea.

"Bless my heart and life!" said a voice. "Is that you, my dear sir?"

"Mr. Suffles!" said Dolan.

"Hush—oh, don't, my dear sir—oh, hush! Call me Brown, Smith, or Tomkins; but good gracious! not Suff—hem! I was nearly saying it myself. You don't know what a job I have had."

"Indeed!" said Dolan, as a few steps of wading brought him onto the beach.

"Yes, Mr. Dolan! I beg your pardon—I believe you have a partiality for being called captain—Captain Dolan, I mean. You would hardly believe what a bother I have had."

"About what?"

"Why, my dear sir—bless my life!—of course to put the Preventives on the wrong scent. I think I may take upon myself to say that they are about five miles off."

"Well; now to business."

"Hum! Much of cargo?"

"Excellent!"

"How much? Money is so very scarce, Captain Dolan, that really I was in doubt if I could, or ought to come down at all to-night to make you an offer—only I saw the signal on the corner of the rock, and I said to myself: 'No—no,' says I, 'if I can offer ever so little to Captain Dolan for his venture, it is my duty to go and offer it.' Hem!"

"Is that all?"

"My dear sir!"

"Very good. Five hundred pounds."

"What?"

"Five hundred pounds."

"Five—oh Lord—hundred—good gracious!—pounds. Oh dear! Hal' absurd!"

"Very good, Mr. Suffles. If the venture don't suit you, I will go to sea with it again, and we will find somebody on the Suffolk coast to take it. I know its value—you don't. Good-night. Now, my men, push off!"

"Stop—stop! you are so very precipitate."

"Mr. Suffles, in a word, time is life or death to us. Will you take these four boat-loads of contraband for five hundred pounds or not? You know you can trust me. You have dealt with me long, and you have never repented it."

"Say four hundred."

"No."

"Four hundred and fifty."

"No."

"Very well. Digmouse."

"Yea, sir."

Captain Dolan started as this "yea, sir," was said in a strange, snuffling kind of tone, quite close to him.

"Digmouse," added Mr. Suffles, "get ready."

"Yea, sir."

"What an odd fellow, and what an odd name!" said Dolan.

"Yes, but invaluable. He is the clerk of the church. Oh, here we are now!"

Creaking down to the beach came some half-dozen light carts, each drawn by a strong, young, active horse, and driven by a boy. The active scene that now ensued was, or would have been, quite a sight to see, could any eyes but those so well accustomed to the work have penetrated the gloom in which it was all conducted.

Not a light was permitted to be seen; but the process of unloading the boats and loading the light carts was conducted with a rapidity and skill only to be acquired by practice.

"Now, Mr. Suffles," said Dolan, "the money."

"You are so sharp, my dear friend. There it is."

"One, two, three, four, five—hundred pound-notes."

"Yea, Digmouse."

"Yea, sir."

"Run up the lane and see that all is clear."

"Yea, sir."

"Does he never say anything but 'Yea, sir'?" said Dolan.

"Very seldom."

A kind of yell—a half-scream, half-yell—at this moment burst from the lips of some one a considerable distance off; and it was faintly echoed by Mr. Suffles, as he said:

"Digmouse! Digmouse! The Philistines!"

"The what?" cried Dolan.

"Lost. Found. I mean. Give me back the notes—at once—quick! The Philistines—good gracious!—quick—the notes!"

Dolan uttered a brutal kind of laugh, and sprang forward to the boats.

"Push off—push off!" he cried. "To seal to sea at once, or all are lost!"

"Hold!" cried a loud voice. "We fire if a single man stirs. Now, on, my preventives!"

"The lieutenant," gasped Mr. Suffles, and he fell flat on the beach.

"Push off!" said Dolan.

The boats' keels grated on the beach. There was a rush of footsteps, and the temporary flare of a lantern, which went out again in a moment; and then some one flung his arms round Dolan, as he was about to jump into the boat.

"You are my prisoner!"

"No."

"Yes. Oh, God!"

Dolan had plunged a long, double-edged poniard into the back of the man, and then he vaulted into the boat.

"Fire!" cried a voice.

"Stoop!" roared Dolan.

There was a rattling discharge of pistols, the flash of which lighted up the faces of a strong party of preventive seamen, headed by a lieutenant in full uniform, who were on the beach. The crews of the Rift's boats made no hindrance of that discharge of bullets, but pushed off to sea, just as the preventive men made a rush forward with their drawn cutlasses.

"Never mind," said the lieutenant. "The Nancy is in the offing."

"Oh, indeed!" said Dolan; "then that will be all the worse for the Nancy—that is all. Pull away!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

The common danger seemed to have completely, for the moment, restored the authority of Dolan; and his crew treated him with an amount of respect they were far from according to him in the sea-cavern. They felt and knew the advantage, in moments of danger, of having one directing head. Rapidly the boats left the beach, on which, now, a number of lights began to show themselves; and then Dolan said, in a deep, low voice:

"Pull for the bay, but not at once for the cavern. Coast the cliff, and keep a good lookout. How many are we?"

"Four, sir."

"One, two, three, four—what's that?"

"What, sir?"

"Five. There are five of us."

In the deep gloom—a gloom in which the four boats of the smugglers looked like the backs of four huge black fish in the sea—those who were in Dolan's boat saw, or fancied they saw, astern of the fourth boat, yet another, which kept regular pace with them, at about twenty yards distance.

"The Nancy!" he said.

"Well, that's cool," said Bowline.

"And clever," said Dolan. "She is watching us; and, if she had not been seen, the secret of the sea-cavern would not have been worth a farthing by the morning. We should have had a frigate from the station in the bay."

"What's to be done?"

"Pull slack. It's a small boat."

"Ten oars."

"Ah! so much?"

"If it's the Nancy, sir; and lying down in her may be a dozen well armed men."

"Hum! We shall see. They must go."

"Yea; they must go."

It was evident that a kind of shudder of excitement had passed among the crew of Dolan's boat, for the oars were at the moment not dipped in unison, and one man made a false stroke, entirely.

Dolan was stooping, and busily unlocking the locker in the stern of the boat.

"Take the helm!" he said. "I am busy, and shall be busier."

"Ay, ay, sir."

From the locker Dolan took a round substance about the size of a twelve pound shot. It was carefully wrapped in brown paper, which he tore off in slips, till he came to one portion of the round substance, from which projected a short piece which suggested the idea of the fusee of a shell.

"Pull easy!"

The men only lightly dipped their oars into the water; and the fifth boat, that followed in the wake of those belonging to the rift, neared Dolan. In fact, owing to the slackened speed of Dolan's boat, the others began rather to spread round it in a kind of half-circle.

The fifth boat neared rapidly. Then Dolan stood up in the stern of his boat, and cried out:

"We give in! No ill usage, and we give in!"

"That will do," said a voice from the fifth boat. "Ship your oars, you rascals."

Dolan then flung the round object he had in his hand on board the fifth boat.

"Take care of that," he said.

"What is it?"

"Divide it among you."

There was then a terrific explosion—a broad sheet of flame for a moment lit up the water—and then all was darkness.

The fifth boat was gone! A wailing, sobbing cry—then a shriek. Then all was still.

"So much for the Nancy," said Dolan. "Now, my men, pull for the cavern at once."

Bang! went a gun from some vessel at this moment at the mouth of the bay.

Dolan uttered an exclamation of alarm. In the confined space of the little bay, this gun sounded as though it were fired close at hand, although in reality it was more than a mile off. Yet it portended mischief, although Dolan almost immediately corrected his first impression as regarded its apparent proximity to the cavern.

"Quick now, men!" he cried; "for your lives, quick! There is mischief in the offing."

The smuggler crew bent to their oars, and the boat went swiftly through the water. They were soon under the deep shadow of the tall cliff, within which were those most mysterious cavernous recesses.

Then Dolan was compelled to venture upon the production of a light for a moment, in order that those whom he had left in charge of the cavern might know that the approaching boats were friendly.

It was but for an instant that he permitted that light to be seen, and then he took pains that no wandering ray from it, however faint, should travel seaward.

"Now," he said. "Ah! there again."

Another report of a gun echoed across the still waters of the bay.

"The Spray," said a voice.

"No—no!" cried Dolan, "her cruise is surely over."

"I seem to know the sound of her guns," said the man who had spoken.

Dolan was silent for a moment or two, and then he said:

"It may be the Spray; but we have little to fear from her while we keep our own counsel. Now we are at home."

The foremost boat shot into the cavernous recess, and the others soon followed. Dolan blew a long, peculiar, wailing note upon his whistle, and then, mingled with the sighing of the night-wind, and the confused wash of the waves, the creaking of pulleys, and the opening of the cliff was covered up, and all was calm and still in the sea cavern.

"Captain Dolan, the crew want to know if you got the money from Mr. Suffles for the cargo. They didn't quite know in the dark and confusion," asked Martin.

Dolan was silent for a moment, and his right hand was plunged deep into his pocket, clutching the five notes for a hundred pounds each, as the thought rapidly ran through his brain that, after all he might appropriate them to his own use, and the men be none the wiser; but yet there was the suspicion that Martin knew he had the notes, and had only said these words to test him.

Cupidity, however, got the better of the mental battle.

"No!" said Dolan.

"You have not the money, captain?"

"No; he was just going to pay me when the attack took place; and I missed the money!"

Hardly had these words passed the lips of Captain Dolan, when, with a howl and a cry, some dark object bounded up from the bottom of one of the boats; and then the voice of Mr. Suffles cried:

"Don't believe him! I did pay him. It's my money—my five hundred pounds. I paid for the cargo; but the officers have it. Give me back my money. I'm a ruined man. It's all I have in the world—my five hundred pounds."

Dolan who had gained the deck of the Rift, fairly staggered at this most unexpected appearance of Mr. Suffles; and then he cried out:

"Seize him! seize him!—a spy! a spy! Seize him, or you are all lost, my men!"

There was a rush to the boat; and Mr. Suffles was laid hold of, and held by half a dozen hands.

"You are a nice idiot!" said one. "Why didn't you jump into the sea, instead of coming here?"

"My money! my money! Oh, my good men, don't do any harm to me. I only want my money. I got into one of your boats to get out of the way of the preventive men, and to follow my money."

Mr. Suffles gazed about him in a scared sort of way, as the flickering light of the torch that had been lit in the cavern, when the orifice to the sea was closed, shed an uncertain air upon his terrified features.

"Hold him!" said Dolan. "Secure his hands. He is a spy, and he maligns me. I have not his money!"

"Search me! search me!" screamed Suffles. "I have no money but a few odd pounds about me. I paid him five hundred pounds in notes. Search me, and then search him!"

"Why, you scoundrel!" said Dolan, with rage in every tone; "how dare you come here, and throw away your worthless life with a lie

on your lips! Hark ye, my men: this is all a plan between this man and the preventive station. The secret of your home here in the cliff is now known to him. What is it worth? Do you not all of you feel as if the halter were about your necks, as it will be—as it will be?"

"Not no!"

"But I say, yes! yes!" added Dolan, "if you let this man go. If you do not, why, all I have to say to you, Richards—for I see you looking at me—is, that dead men tell no tales!"

"Death—death to the spy!" cried several.

Then Mr. Suffles began to think that his position was getting rather perilous.

"My good men," he said—and he licked his rapidly-parching lips as he spoke—"my good men, I will not betray you. I am no spy; my interests are all the other way. I will not say one word of this place. Why should I—oh! why should I?"

There was a whispered consultation among the smugglers; and then two of them began to lift from the bottom of the boat some heavy chain-links that were there as ballast, and to run a cord through them to hold them together.

"Stop! stop!" said Mr. Suffles. "My good men—my brave and noble fellows, stop, I beg of you! I love you all—gallant fellows as you are. Mercy! oh, have mercy upon me, Dolan! Captain Dolan, spare me. I will say anything for my life. I will say you did not have the money. Five hundred pounds for my life—my life!"

The smugglers hung the heavy chain-links round his neck like a huge iron necklace. They weighed him down nearly to his knees.

"Mercy! help! I know what this means; you want to drown me."

A twist of the rope was made fast under the arms of Mr. Suffles, and the chain-links were secured; but in doing that, they loosened the cord that held his hands behind his back, and he held them both up imploringly.

"Save me!—oh, save me! Have mercy upon me. Help! murder! murder! murder!"

The sound was stifled in the sea. There was a shriek and a plunge, and Mr. Suffles sunk to the bottom of the heaving waves of the sea-cavern.

Mr. Suffles could swim.

Early in the contest—the wordy contest for his life—he had secured in one of his hands a small pocket knife, with the frantic idea of attempting to fight his way out of the cavern. That idea had passed away as being too madly impracticable; but he had kept the knife concealed, partly by his sleeve and partly in his hand.

It was a good friend to him now.

Holding his breath as he dived to the bottom of the sea by virtue of the weight of the chain-links, Mr. Suffles tore open the clasped knife with his teeth, and made frantic slashes over his chest with it, in the hope to cut the cord which held the sinking ballast of iron that weighed him down in his place. He cut his clothing, and made long slashes in his skin; and then the cord was severed, and he was in a moment free of the iron weight.

Up to the surface shot Mr. Suffles, half-suffocated, and with a ringing noise in his ears, as if a thousand whistling winds were blowing through the cordage of a navy.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FATHER, THE DAUGHTER, AND THE FRIEND.

THE course of our narrative has compelled us, for a time, to leave the cabin of the Rift and its inhabitants—Captain Mocquet and the fair Marie. It is necessary, now, that we should request the reader's attention to a period antecedent to much that has taken place in the sea-cavern.

That period is when the Rift first made its way into the cave, and when Gerald was in the cabin of the cutter, soon after Dolan had met with the fright that the supposed apparition of Marie had given to him.

Although, for the time, this appearance of Marie had been sufficient to rid Gerald, and Captain Mocquet, and his daughter of the presence of Dolan, they yet could not but feel their absolute danger so soon as the Rift got fairly to its moorings in the cavern of the cliff.

The gallant and heroic youth could think but of one course of action that promised any successful result, and that was to try, during the ensuing few hours that the Rift would probably be left to itself, while the crew, with Dolan would go to dispose of the cargo of the *Cquette*, to get both Captain Mocquet and his daughter out of the vessel and into the other portion of the caverns, and there hide them until some opportunity afforded itself for the escape of them and of himself.

After the manner in which Captain Dolan had scrambled to the deck of the Rift, upon seeing what he supposed to be the spirit of the young French girl, the little party in the cabin kept a profound silence, for they could not know but the result of this fright might be an inducement to some of the crew to make an examination of the cabin.

If that had ensued, all would have been lost,

so far as the keeping the existence of Marie a secret, although probably she would have been in no sort of danger.

It was Gerald who broke the silence after the departure of Captain Dolan.

"Courage—courage, sir," he said. "All is well now. He will not come here again—he dare not."

Captain Mocquet held both the hands of Gerald in his own, and in broken accents thanked him. Then he spoke with great volubility, in French, to Marie, who, with an abundance of little nods of the head and *mon Dieu*, replied to him. Then she came and sat down by the side of Gerald, and held his arm, and looked up in his face, while her cheek rested on his shoulder, and with little arch looks, and pretty shrugs and smiles, she entered into some long history to him, of which he knew nothing but the tones.

"Captain Mocquet," said Gerald, "I do not understand what your dear Marie says."

Captain Mocquet then spoke to Marie, and she said something to him, upon which he turned to Gerald, saying:

"The dear child shall say that her heart will speak at your heart, and that the language is—what you call it—*n'importe*—no thing. *Eh! mon cher Gerald*, we shall love you over and over."

Marie smiled.

"Captain Mocquet, I think I will go on deck."

"You shall be kill then."

"No—no. Will you take Marie?"

Marie heard this—she did not know what the words meant, but there was a little perceptible action on the part of Gerald, as though he would lift her from him, and she crept away to her father, and rested her head upon his lap. Through the quivering lashes of her eyes, though, she looked at Gerald.

"No," said Mocquet, "you will be kill. We will kill or save together—I mean live or death in *la belle France*. I am *propriétaire*, and we shall be happy."

"Well," said Gerald, "I will not go upon deck; but listen, Captain Mocquet, to what I have to say to you. When this vessel reaches a cavern in the cliffs of England, to which it is going, I must try to get help, in order that I may rescue you and Marie."

"Gerald," said Marie, as she heard her own name pronounced, "Marie, Gerald—Gerald, Marie!"

"Then, Captain Mocquet, I will, with my dear sister Grace, find a means of our leaving the place—for she wishes to leave it—and I, after the events of this voyage, feel that I cannot, longer than is necessary, breathe the same air with Dolan. You understand me, sir?"

"Oui—yes."

Marie looked and listened, and Gerald spoke still more and more unfolding his plans to Captain Mocquet, until the sharp reports of the guns of the Rift engaged all their attention.

It was that continued firing which the cutter kept up when close to the cliff, so that under cover of the smoke she might make her way into the sea-cavern.

Then, from the noises that ensued, Gerald knew perfectly well what was going on, and he whispered to Captain Mocquet:

"The Rift is safe, and will soon be at anchor in her own little subterranean sea."

Then they heard the chain cable rattle out, and the little smuggling vessel swung easily in the sea-cavern by one anchor.

It was then that Gerald listened to what was passing above with the most intense interest, and when he heard the voice of Grace, he took the hand of Captain Mocquet, saying:

"Trust me, dear sir, I will soon return to you. Do not leave the Rift, if you can help it, until I see you."

Captain Mocquet kissed Gerald on the cheek, and then, boy-like, he would have shaken hands with Marie; but she put both her arms round his neck, and clasped her fingers one in the other, as though she meant them there to stay for a while, and she kissed first one of his cheeks and then the other, as she smilingly sung:

"Marie, Gerald—Gerald, Marie!"

Then she gently let him go, and shook hands with him, and laughed. That light-hearted Marie, who, in the midst of so much peril, could sing and laugh!

Gerald did not choose to encounter Dolan on the deck of the Rift. Indeed he did not know what view Dolan would take of his leaving the Rift at all. Hence was it, then, that he preferred reaching Grace by the mode of swimming to the foot of those little steps leading through the recesses of the caverns to the inhabited portion of that ocean-house.

We left Gerald and Grace in conversation about their future hopes and prospects, just as Mrs. Wagner made her appearance before them, apparently in one of her most imperious moods.

"Come," she said to Grace, "do not be idling there, I have some work for you to do."

"I am talking with my brother," said Grace, quietly.

"Then you will cease talking with your brother. Come this way at once!"

"No!" said Grace.

"No!" said Gerald.

"What! you defy me, do you—you two hateful imps! I shall be forced to find one whom you must obey; but, for your consolation, Miss Grace, I can tell you that your Gerald, that you make so much fuss with, has fired on a king's ship; and so, if anything happens wrong about the Rift, he will be worse off than any one else."

"That is false," said Gerald.

"I thought so, dear," said Grace.

"Oh, you two wretches!" screamed Mrs. Wagner. "I will be even with you both before I have done with you. I could tell you something that you would like to hear, but I won't—no, I won't; you might have made friends with me, and then I would have told you, but I won't now. Do you hear me?"

"Very well," said Grace.

This indifference to her shouts and to her blandishments raised the ire of Mrs. Wagner to fever heat, and going close up to Grace, she said:

"I know your father—ha! ha! How my lady starts now—ha! ha! ha! Well, I don't mind telling you this much. Dolan is not your father."

"Not her father?" said Gerald. "Then she is not my—"

"Sister!" gasped Grace.

"Nor is Dolan your father, for the matter of that," added Mrs. Wagner.

"We may still, then, dear Grace, be brother and sister."

"We are, Gerald. We shall ever be, in dear affection, if not in fact."

"Ever and ever," said Gerald.

"Very good," says Mrs. Wagner; "and now when you want to know a little more, perhaps you will be civil to me—for I only can tell you, and can make my terms with you."

Mrs. Wagner turned away; and as she did so, she muttered something to herself about Dolan being out of his senses, and that it was high time she (Mrs. Wagner) looked after herself.

Grace and Gerald continued silent for some time, and looked in each other's faces by the dim light that marked the recess where they were, and then Gerald took Grace's two hands and placed them upon his breast, as he said:

"My Gracie, on board the Rift is this young French girl whom I saved from the sea—she is very beautiful—she is very affectionate, and—and—I think—"

The color went and came in the face of Grace, and she could only see Gerald through a mist of tears.

"You think, dear Gerald, that she loves you. I, too, love you, and so will that—that—"

She turned her face away, and Gerald felt her little hands trembling on his breast.

"Yes, Gracie—yes!"

"That I hope you love her, and will be so—so very happy all your life with her; and, for your sake—I, too, will love her."

The large tear-drops fell from the eyes of Grace, and then she made an effort to smile, and to dash them from her eyes.

Gerald drew her gently toward him.

"My Gracie, sister, you shall be loved with a brother's proudest affections. If no sister, there is none other who will ever be to me what you are, My Gracie. I love you—you only."

Grace covered her face with both her hands, and some hysterical sobs came from her. Then a light footstep sounded close to them, and a voice said:

"Ware spies, Master Gerald! She's coming to listen."

"Ah, Joseph!"

"Hush, sir! Mother Wagner is in the offing."

"Oh, Joseph! you will help us! We will trust you."

"You come to my lookout."

"The first plateau?"

"Yes, soon."

"At once. Speak of something else, Gracie, dear! The sea—the weather—anything."

"And did the ship fire on the Rift?" said Grace.

"Fie, dear! But the Rift outsailed it. The schooner could not keep up with us."

"Bah!" said Mrs. Wagner, as she crept away.

"They are but children yet. I could make something out of him, I fancy, but it wants caution. Dolan is mad about his ghost of a French girl in the cabin of the Rift."

Mrs. Wagner, finding that there was nothing to learn by her espial upon Grace and Gerald, made no secret of her attempt to overhear them but walked away without the least regard to secrecy in her footstep.

The first plateau which the old seaman Joseph had mentioned as where he would be found, was that lookout on the face of the cliff where it was, as a general thing, his duty to be, and where he had held several conferences with poor Grace, while Gerald was making that enforced voyage in the Rift.

They both now sought Joseph's post; and as they went, they made up their minds thoroughly to trust him, and to get him to concoct with them some means of saving Captain Mocquet and Marie from the cabin of the Rift.

The old sailor was anxiously expecting them, and when they appeared he said:

"Come right away, as fast as you can, onto the plateau, my children, I want to speak to you both."

"And we to you, Joseph."

"Well, then, I'll hear you first."

"No, Joseph," said Grace, "you tell us what you want to say, and then we will make every confidence with you, for you have a good heart."

"Thank you, miss, for saying that, and God bless you. Well, then, what I want to say is that I think Captain Dolan is going to desert the ship."

"The ship?"

"Lord bless me! I mean the cavern; and I don't mean that he is merely going to desert it, but I think he is going to betray the whole lot of us to the preventives."

"Indeed, Joseph?"

"Yes, Master Gerald. I know him pretty well, you see, and have had more than one voyage with him when he was only a smuggler. I'm afeared now he's something worse."

"He is, indeed?"

"Just so, Master Gerald; and I think he knows the game is pretty well up here, and he will be off with all he can lay his hands on; and the crew will find, before they can say Jack Robinson, that they will all be taken."

"Yes, yes!" said Gerald, "and that was why he wished so particularly to make me go this one voyage—it being his last—in order that I should be convicted with them."

"That's about it, Master Gerald."

"Oh, Gerald! Gerald!" said Grace, "what shall we do?"

"L—vant!" said Joseph.

"What, Joseph—what is that?"

"Be off, miss—you, and me, and Gerald, and one more."

"Who is that?"

"Martin, and here he is."

"Well, Bo," said Martin, as at this moment he came onto the plateau, "how is the weather?"

"West by north, mate, and puffy. Here's the two children. I've been a talking to 'em about him."

"Dolan?"

"Ay, ay! mate, and I've been a-saying that you, and me, and them, too, had better up anchor and sheer off, with all the canvas we can set to the wind."

"I think so, too," said Martin.

"Then hear me," said Gerald. "I cannot go without others. There are two people in the cabin of the Rift that I have promised to stay by, and sink or swim with."

Martin nodded.

"I thought as much. The Frenchman's little girl is there, is she not?"

"She is."

"I thought it by the poor old man's way; but how she got there I can't think. Dolan has told Bowline that he has seen a ghost in the cabin, and that he wouldn't go into it for a thousand pounds. He wants Bowline to go and clear out his lockers for him."

"I saved Marie Mocquet," said Gerald. "I saved her from the wreck of the Coquette and brought her into the cabin, by the help of her father, through the port."

Martin whistled.

"Hold hard," said Joseph. "There's wind on 'em."

"All right, Bo. Well, Master Gerald, we will do the best we can. A Frenchman, I take it, is, after all, a human being."

"No doubt of it," said Joseph.

"And he can't help being a Frenchman."

"Not a bit, mate."

"And this one, I will say, seems to me as if he had the feelings of a Christian. Now, Master Gerald, we will get him and his baby away some how."

"It is not a baby," said Gerald.

"Oh, ain't it? Very good! I propose that we wait quietly till all's at rest in the sea cave, which won't be till after the cargo has been taken to the shore. That Mr. Suffles will be there to buy it, as usual; and then, when the boats come back, Dolan will go to rest, and the Rift will be left to ride out the night with only one man on board, as a night-watch."

"But how shall we get off?" said Gerald. "Can we get to the ravine easily from the sea-cave? I only know of a way through the large cavern."

"Oh! you leave that to us," said Martin. "I dare say, Master Gerald, that Joseph and I know a little more of the old cliff than you do."

"And now, mate," said Joseph, "when we get away, where are we to go to?"

"Look here," said Martin; "I think that you and I, my Bo, have had enough of this kind of life. Let us make our way right away eastward, till we come to some nice little place, and then we will buy a boat and set up respectable, and get a living for these two young ones by fishing, and what else turns up. I have more than enough money to set us afloat."

"That's it," said Joseph.

"And do you think," said Gerald, with emotion—"God bless and reward you both!—do you think that I would let myself be a burden to you, and my dear Grace, either? Oh, no—"

no! I will find something to do that will help us all."

"All right, Master Gerald," said Martin. "You make your mind easy about the Frenchman; and his baby."

Gerald looked annoyed, as he said:

"I tell you again and again, that she is a very beautiful young girl, and never was a baby—I mean—that is—no—"

"Go it!" said Joseph.

"Come, dear," said Grace as she slid her arm within that of Gerald. "Come, you want rest, Gerald."

It was deep in the night when that same little party were assembled on the chalky plateau of the old cliff.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAPTAIN MORTON CALLS ON MRS. WAGNER.

WHEN Captain Morton went from Admiral Clifford so abruptly for the purpose of seeking the woman Wagner, from whom he now fully expected he should be able, by fair means or by foul, to procure the information he required, in order to enable him at once to clasp to his heart his long-lost child: he was in that state of mental excitement that submerges everything in the one dominant idea.

The cottages he sought by the sea-beach were some distance off on the coast, and lying in a hollow of the beach, and it at once appeared to him that the best and the easiest way to reach them was, by cruising round to them in his own yacht.

Skimming gallantly over the waves, the Nautilus soon passed the group of cottages, in one of which the old, dying—now dead—smuggler, Hutchins, had made to Captain Morton such important revelations. After that spot was passed, there were several bluffs and little headlands, and there, in a wildly picturesque spot, where the full force of the landslip, so long ago, had been felt, he saw the group of fishermen's huts he was in search of.

A brief order brought the Nautilus on another tack, and she beat up for the little half bay, half indentation—rugged and unequal in its dimensions as it was—on the margin of which were the cottages.

Then a touch of the helm, and the Nautilus rode so lightly off, and on the wind, that she scarcely shifted her position twenty yards in the water, although she carried one sail, and there was nothing to hold her to the bottom of the deep.

A boat was lowered from her side, and with one of his men only, Captain Morton pulled for the shore.

A ragged-looking urchin, with his trowsers curled up to the knees, came into the water to help pull up the boat, but it was not Captain Morton's instructions that it should be beached.

"No," he said, "that will do."

The boy looked at him then, inquiringly, and said, as he touched his cap:

"The spring, sir."

"What spring?"

"Thereaway, sir. They say it's all rain that's in the water, but I never see'd rain thataway like, sir, afore."

A chalybeate spring gushed out of a huge fragment of the fallen rock, and Captain Morton shook his head, as he said:

"No, I do not come for the spring—which is the cottage of Mrs. Wagner?"

"That one, sir."

The boy indicated one of the cottages, from the chimney of which came rather more smoke than from any of the others, and then he added:

"But I don't think she's at home, sir; though, mayhap, old Madge be."

"Who is old Madge?"

"She minds the cottage while Mrs. Wagner goes a-fishing with Mr. Dolan. I'll go and see if she be there, though, for a penny, sir."

"I can do that myself. Perhaps this Mr. Dolan may be there."

Captain Morton had been walking up the shingle, as he spoke to the boy, at the rather slow pace which such a place necessitates, and as he got a few paces in front of the lad, he suddenly heard a very shrill whistle behind him, and found that it proceeded from the boy, who produced it by a reed he had at his lip.

"What do you whistle for?"

"Nothing, sir."

That it was for something, however, was fully evident; for the door of Dolan's cottage was on the moment opened, and a female looked out. Then the door was closed again, and there seemed, to the attentive ears of Captain Morton, the sound of fastening it within. The captain looked at the boy with a forced smile, as he said:

"I suppose, my boy, you consider that you have only done your duty."

The boy looked dubiously at the captain, as though he scarcely comprehended what he meant, and then sidled off with a puzzled expression, as if he rather felt sorry that he had whistled than not. There was a fine, frank, open look about the boy's brow, and Captain Morton paused and beckoned to him.

The boy marched up to him at once.

"What is your name?"

"Charlie."
"Have you a mother?"
Tears started to the boy's eyes, which he dashed off with the back of his hand, and then said, hastily:

"Dead!"
"A father?"
The boy turned and looked toward the sea.
"Yes. Thereaway fishing. I don't see him often."

"Charlie, I have a little girl—my only little child. I am looking for her. Have you seen here such a one? She is tall, rather—has auburn hair—darker rather than auburn, and she moves so lightly."

"Auburn!" said the boy, with a puzzled look, "what's that? Grace has such beautiful hair; it is like the sea-weed right away down at the bottom of the bay—the sea-weed that won't ever come up—you may see it through the water, waving about like Grace's hair; but that which comes up is so different."

"Grace—Grace! You—come, boy, you will tell me? Hush! hush! one moment."

There was a short, quick respiration on the part of Captain Morton, and he pressed his hands upon his heart for a moment or two, before he could still the emotion that had come over him. Then he spoke again:

"You have seen her here, boy? You have seen such a young creature here?"

"Oh, yes, I know Grace! She is Grace Dolan."

"No, no!"
"Oh, yes! she is, indeed. You don't know, but I do. She and Gerald used often to come here, but they don't now so much, and Grace was crying when she came last."

"When was that?"
The boy shook his head.

"I don't seem to recollect just when it was. I'm coming—well, I'm coming."

The boy's eyes were directed to the cottage of Dolan, and Captain Morton now, by following their gaze, saw that some one at a window was shaking an arm threateningly at the boy. The captain then nodded and smiled to Charlie, and leisurely walked up to the cottage door.

"Now, calm, calm, calm!" he said to himself. "I must not let myself be oppressed by too much feeling, or those who have none will use it as a weapon against me that will soon wound my heart."

He tapped at the door, and it was instantly opened by no other than Mrs. Wagner herself, who had a defiant "well-what-now?" sort of look about her, that let the captain see she was prepared for resistance.

"Mrs. Wagner," said Captain Morton.

"Well, sir!"
"I want to speak to you."

"You have your tongue, then, I fancy."

"Out of my way, woman!" said the captain, with a sudden fierceness that alarmed Mrs. Wagner. "I wonder I have patience with your insolence, and don't call my men and lock you up at once. Out of the way—a chair! Be quick! Insolent, indeed! Will you be quick? I said a chair! Oh, dust it! Place it there—that will do."

Mrs. Wagner obeyed Captain Morton's orders by a sort of instinct. He had cowed her.

"What?" she said, "who—"

"Silence!"
She was silent on the moment.

"Shut the door."

"Yes, sir!"
"Where's the girl you call Grace? Be quick!"

"Grace?"
"How dare you repeat my words without answering me? Be quick—where is she?"

The voice in which Captain Morton spoke was such a roar, that it filled the little cottage and terrified Mrs. Wagner.

"Grace Dolan?" she said.

"No!" said Captain Morton. "You know that's a lie! Where is she? Quick! By the Heaven above us!"

He rose from his chair, and laying hold of it, dashed it to pieces against the floor of the cottage.

"She is not here!—I declare, sir, she is not here," said Mrs. Wagner.

"Not here! Fire and fury, woman! if you don't fetch her at once—"

"I can't, sir—oh, I can't!"

"Why? why?" roared the captain.

"Because she is dead!"

"Dead! dead! dead! Oh, Heaven! Too late—too late! Grace—my child—my own—my darling—dead! Oh, God! Oh, God!"

He sunk to his knees on the brick flooring of the cottage, and sobbed bitterly.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Wagner. "I thought so. Now, sir, if you have anything to say to me, you will perhaps utter your words. Grace is dead, and I alone can restore her to you, if you are her father."

"Not dead!"

"Certainly not. Get up, sir! Sit down! Do you hear me? Sit down, I say."

Captain Morton looked calmly at Mrs. Wagner.

"Woman," he said, "if you think to assume any power over me, on account of what you may know of my long-lost child, you are much

mistaken. I know—I can guess the feelings and objects of such as you. I will buy or win the information I seek, and you must sell it civilly, or I will manage to get it elsewhere; and in that case, I will at once take you into custody."

"A truce, sir!" said Mrs. Wagner. "I know all about the girl. She was wrecked from an American ship. Old Hutchins knows all about her, too, for she lived with him and his wife for a long time."

"I know that. Hutchins told me so, and that Dolan took her from him. He is dead."

"Hutchins dead?"

"Yes; I was with him in his last moments, and he told me all he knew. I now want my daughter, who is this Grace Dolan, as she has been called so long. If you aid me in getting at once possession of her, you may almost name your own reward."

Mrs. Wagner reflected.

"America," she said, "and a thousand pounds."

"Agreed. Is my child here?"

"Wait here for one hour, and you shall have her in your arms."

"An hour?"

"Yes, rather more than less. How do I know?" she added; "you may get me on board your yacht, and then you may land me anywhere, and not give me the thousand pounds."

How do I know?"

"How can I assure you? Stay; I will do one thing with you. See here."

Captain Morton took from his breast-pocket a small folded parcel, and upon opening it, it was found to be the flag with the stars and stripes on fine silk.

"I will give you this," he said, "and I will write on it, 'Captain Morton owes Mrs. Wagner one thousand pounds.' You shall send this flag where you please, so that you return it to me when I give you the thousand pounds, which I will do so soon as I place you on board of any vessel bound for America, and my dear child is with me."

"Very well. Wait here; no one will interrupt you. I will bring the girl to you."

"Be quick—quick as you can; I will pay you fifty pounds for every five minutes you are here within the hour."

He took out his watch, and Mrs. Wagner went hastily to another room, and, with a speed that almost defeated its object, began to tie on a bonnet.

"High time," she said—"high time. I will be rid of Dolan now once and for all, and that old Joseph! I hope he will be hung; yes, I should like him and Martin to be hung, and Dolan. It would be a great relief to my mind to hang Dolan—in chains, too—a gibbet; I should like to do that."

"Would you?" said Dolan, as he put his head in at the door of the room. "Would you, really?"

Mrs. Wagner did not scream—she was too horrified for that—but she stood like a statue, with her bonnet-strings in her hand, glaring at Dolan.

She was certainly fascinated by Dolan's look, as he very slowly came into the room, still keeping his eyes upon her, fascinated as people are said to be by the eyes of a serpent; and Dolan's movements, as he crept up to her, were reptile-like.

"You would, would you?"

She tried to speak.

"You would like to see me hung?"

A purring sound only came from the throat of Mrs. Wagner.

"Gibbet—gibbet?"

"No—I—no! Mercy on me!"

"Ah!"

It was with something between a bowl and a yell that Dolan sprang upon her and caught her by the throat. She fell to the floor in a swoon.

"What is that?" cried Captain Morton, as he opened the door of the room in which he was waiting. "What is that?"

There was no reply.

The room opened, in the direction of the sound that Dolan had made, onto a little, dark passage, and it was from that open that the door of the apartment, where Dolan and Mrs. Wagner were, opened, and through which Dolan had appeared, to the surprise and the consternation of his guilty associate.

Dolan hardly permitted himself to breathe.

"I thought I heard a cry," said Captain Morton.

All was profoundly still now, and Captain Morton returned to the room. He thought he might be mistaken, and the natural dislike he had to intrude into the other apartments of the cottage deterred him from prosecuting a search.

He sat down quietly to wait for Mrs. Wagner and Grace—as quietly as he could, with his feelings in such a tumult of expectation.

Then Dolan opened the door leading into the passage, and listened very attentively.

"Who is here?" he said. "Who is it that can be heard? Name one spoke. Who can it be?"

He went and shook Mrs. Wagner.

"Wretch!" he said; "wretch, tell me who is in the cottage?"

"Bah! I must see for myself. It will be worse for whoever it is!"

Dolan crept out into the little passage, and crouched down close to the door of the room in which Captain Morton was.

He had no difficulty in looking through the key-hole of the door. There sat the bereaved father. A sharp, cold current of air came through the key-hole of the door, and Dolan's eyes smarted as he shifted his position, so that first one and then the other glared into the room.

"A man!" he muttered. "Who and what is he? How much does he know? Too much, of course. There must be an end of him. I have gone too far to care about a life now. He has come here, and this place will be his grave!"

He drew a pistol and carefully raised the trigger. Then he slowly turned the handle of the door-lock, and succeeded in opening it without attracting the attention of Captain Morton, who was still sitting on a chair waiting for his daughter and Mrs. Wagner.

Dolan was on the point of rushing into the room when he was startled by a shrill voice in the front passage of the little cottage, which called out:

"Mrs. Wagner! Mrs. Wagner! here be some sojers a-coming down the lane! Mrs. Wagner! some sojers coming down the lane!"

Dolan started to his feet, for he had been kneeling by the door of the room.

Captain Morton, too, started to his feet.

"What is it—what is it?" he cried.

Opening the door of the room in which he was, he found himself face to face with the boy he had met on the beach.

"What is it?"

"Sogers, sir. Where is Mrs. Wagner, sir?"

"She has gone—gone—I hardly know where, but it is an errand for me."

"Oh, there he is!"

"Who? what?"

Round from the back of the cottage there darted a man, and with extraordinary speed he ran down to the beach.

"Who is that?" asked Captain Morton.

"Captain Dolan."

"Ah! hold! Stop, villain!"

Dolan, with astonishing speed, reached the margin of the sea. The tide had risen, and one of the boats that we have mentioned as being on the beach, was afloat. He sprang into it in a moment, and, seizing the oars, pulled off.

Captain Morton reached his own boat, and, dashing into the surf, he boarded it, and called out:

"That man in the galley—overtake him! Give me an oar. Pull—pull! We shall have him yet!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" said the American sailor; and the boat of the Nautilus shot through the water in pursuit of Dolan.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ESCAPE OF MOCQUET AND MARIE FROM THE RIFT.

We have said that the night was far advanced when, on the little plateau or the cliff which formed the "lookout" of old Joseph, there assembled Martin, Joseph, Gerald, and Grace.

Their object was to escape from the clutches of the Rift Captain Mocquet and his daughter, Marie.

And now, in the silence of the night—a silence only broken by the sullen wash of the sea against the cliffs, and the faint whistle of the wind as it moaned far away on the face of the deep—those four persons met, and in whispers, conversed together as to the best mode of proceeding for the purpose of their escape.

"You, Martin," said Gerald—"you say what is to be done, and I and Grace will all obey you."

"Why, look you here, Master Gerald," said Martin. "One thing is clear enough to see, and that is—that if Dolan has his way, you will be worse off than the Frenchman."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, Gerald. He intends to betray the whole lot of us. And what did he take you on the last cruise for, but to mix you up in the affair?"

"It must be so!"

"Oh, my poor Gerald!" said Grace.

"Come now, miss," said Joseph, "don't you be a taking on about it. We will see you both out of this place. And I'm not sorry to leave it, too."

"I have been thinking about that," said Martin.

"About what?"

"Leaving the place."

"Well, but you don't mean to say that you will stay, Martin, and let Dolan have all his own way?"

"No; but there's some among the crew that I don't want to come to the bad, and if so be as Dolan means that they should fall into the hands of the Frenchman, I should like to talk him, and say to him: 'Let us get the Frenchman and his daughter out of the Rift, and send them off with Gerald, here, and Miss Grace, and then let us speak to the crew.'"

"And tell them all?"

"Ay! Tell them all. Let us come back and lay hold of Dolan, and make him give up the money that he says he has hidden hereaway in chests in the rooms of the Rift, and, not to be outwitted, let us persevere this very night. Before daylight we may be, most of us, far enough away from here."

"That will do."

"Then it's agreed, Joseph?"

"Quite so."

"Now then, for the Rift. It's Benjamin who is on watch on the deck, and I don't seem to care whether he is knocked on the head or not, for a greater ruffian never stepped. Do you know, Joseph, I cannot get out of my head the cries of that man who was drowned in the sea-cave."

"Suffles?"

"Yes. It was a fearful thing. Come on, now. My plan is just to go on board and get Benjamin out of the way by fair means or foul, and then row out into the bay with the Frenchman and his daughter, and get to the cutting in the cliff."

Martin led the way, and with noiseless steps the little party took their route toward that narrow opening in the cliff, with its rude stairs, that led down to the sea cave, and at which Grace had first made her appearance on the occasion of the return of the Rift.

Not the slightest sound disturbed the repose of the sea-cave but those natural ones which might be expected from the restless contact of the water with the sides of the cavern, and the boats, and the cutter.

A single lantern was at the bow of the Rift, and it shone a faint, rippling kind of light on the water.

"Hush!" said Martin. "Do you hear the deck-watch, any of you?"

"No," was the whispered reply from all.

"Then he is gone to sleep."

"That's more than likely," said Joseph, "and if so, you know, Martin, you wouldn't kill him?"

"No. I don't want to kill him. I'll speak to him first, and tell him to be quiet. He is a bad one, but I don't want to kill him. Now, come on."

Martin descended the steps—at the foot of them he had taken the precaution to move one of the boats of the Rift, and into that quietly and slowly they glided.

"Where is Dolan, now?" whispered Gerald.

"In his own caboose, in the upper cavern, I take it," said Martin. "He's fast asleep, you may depend. Hush!"

"What is it?"

"Lord preserve us! What's that?"

A huge, sucking, half-choking noise came upon their ears, as if some huge fish was lapping the edge of the water. They all listened attentively, and the sound ceased.

"I don't half like that," said Joseph.

"Hush! There it is again. It is thereaway, in that dark corner."

"Pull to it," said Gerald.

"Pull away, then."

It was with evident reluctance that Martin slowly pulled with Gerald toward the deep and shadowy portion of the sea-cave, from where the odd sounds came, but he was ashamed not to keep stroke with Gerald, so the boat soon reached to within about twelve feet of the cavern-wall, and then they all strained their eyes forward, for they plainly saw a something close to the wall.

"Lord be good to us," said Martin. "It's got eyes."

The eyes glared at the boat and its occupants, and the lips seemed to move, but no sound issued from them.

"Good Heavens!" said Joseph, "it's Mr. Suffles!"

Then a faint, weak voice said:

"Suffles!" and the hands shook the ringbolt.

"He lives!" said Gerald.

"Poor wretch!" said Martin. "He lives, indeed; but how he got here I can't make out. I'll get him into the boat. Come, Mr. Suffles, no harm is meant you, and if you keep quiet you may get away in safety, for I don't take upon myself to say that it was you who brought the Philistines down on us when we were receiving the cargo."

Mr. Suffles evidently heard these words, but was by far too chilled and too terrified to reply to them, for did he make the least motion to get into the boat.

Then Martin took a vigorous hold on him on one side of his coat-collar, and Joseph on the other, and they lifted the wretched man into the boat.

A shudder passed from head to foot of Mr. Suffles.

"Don't," he said, faintly.

"Don't what?"

"Kill me; I shall soon go."

"Be comforted," said Grace, in her soft, gentle voice. "Be comforted; no one will harm you now. Take heart and be comforted!"

He was still in a moment, and then he said, faintly:

"I did not bring the Philistines."

"That's right," said Martin. "Then I'll look after you, though how you got clear of the chain-links, I don't know."

"Cut—cut them—off," gasped Suffles.

"Oh! you go and tell that to the marines, sailors won't believe it. Hush! not another word now."

The boat was close to the side of the Rift, and then Gerald whispered:

"Rest oars here. I think I can speak to Captain Mocquet through the port here, if I stand on the thwarts of the boat."

"Ay, ay! so you can."

Martin and Joseph kept the boat close to the side of the Rift, and Gerald stood up and looked into the cabin through the little port, which he had passed through on two occasions—once to rescue Marie, and once to rejoin Grace in the cave.

"All was dark in the cabin."

"Captain Mocquet!" whispered Gerald. "Captain Mocquet!"

"Mon Dieu!"

"It is I, sir. Captain Mocquet, it is I, Gerald."

"Ah! c'est le bon Gerald," said Marie.

"Hush! hush!"

"Hoy!" roared a voice from the deck of the Rift.

"Hoy! what's all that by the lee-bow, eh?"

"All right," replied Martin, as he scrambled on board. "A message from the captain to you, Benjamin; and in the first place, he says that if there's any noise, he will blow your brains out."

"Oh! indeed?"

"Yes. He wants the Frenchman."

"I'll not let him go. Not unless Dolan comes for him himself."

"Well, but it's a very odd thing, Benjamin, that Captain Dolan has been obliged to send for Mocquet."

"How obliged? What do you mean by that?"

"Why you know, Benjamin, it was you that tied the chain-links so tight about Suffles?"

"Hold—what if I did? Hold you, now, I say. A fellow don't want to be put in mind of little disagreeables in the middle of the night."

"No; but I was going to tell you. Captain Dolan was fast asleep it appears, when somebody shook him, and when he opened his eyes, who should he see but Suffles."

"Avast!"

"Yes, Suffles. Dead of course, and all damp and cold; and says he: 'Dolan,' says he, 'send for Captain Mocquet,' says he, 'out of the cabin of the Rift; because,' says he, 'I want to go there, and say something to Mocquet's daughter's ghost, who is there,' says he, and then he sat down right on the chest of Captain Dolan, and howled never so horrid."

"Lord Almighty!"

"And so we have come for Mocquet."

"Very good. Now I tell you what, Martin: if you think I'm such a shore-going know-nothing idiot as to believe that cock-and-a-bull story, you don't know your man, and I shall give an alarm."

"Don't. If you do, Suffles's ghost may come here and look over the bulwarks, and say, 'Benjamin! Benjamin! Benjamin!'"

"Benjamin!" said a faint, hollow voice at this moment; and over the larboard-bow of the cutter there just appeared the pale face of Suffles, with the hair all matted with salt-water, and a long piece of seaweed trailing over one eye.

Benjamin made but one somersault right over the starboard bulwarks, and fell plump into the sea.

"Good-by," said Martin.

"Where's he gone?" asked Joseph.

"To the old 'un's locker, I fancy. I don't see him. How are you, Mr. Suffles? Better?"

"Lord bless you, no, Martin; me and Gerald is a holding of him up. He's dreadful limp-getting, but he ain't quite unsensible, 'cos you see he knew you wanted him to say Benjamin, and he said it."

They laid Mr. Suffles carefully down in the boat again, and then Gerald scrambled into the cabin by the port.

"Come, Captain Mocquet," he said. "Come, Marie—you will be saved, I think now."

Mocquet embraced Gerald, and then Marie twined her arm around one of his, and began her song of "Gerald-Marie! Marie-Gerald!"

"Hush! hush!" said Gerald. "Come! come, quick, Captain Mocquet!" he added.

Another moment and they were on the deck of the Rift; and then, by the faint reflection of the lantern at the bows of the ship, they could just all see each other like so many phantoms. Marie still clung to Gerald, and would hardly leave him to let her father help her over the side into the boat. Then for the first time she saw Grace.

The French girl uttered an exclamation of surprise, and held her face toward Grace, who in her gentle, quiet way, kissed her and then shook hands with her.

"*Eh bien,*" said Marie; "*il est ami Gerald, ou est-il?*"

Gerald dropped into the boat. He was the last to leave the Rift, and then he said:

"Really!"

Joseph and Martin took an oar each. Captain Mocquet put his right arm round Marie, and spoke to her rapidly, in tones of great emotion. The boat was slowly and quietly pulled toward the mouth of the cavern.

"Hold!" said Gerald.

They ceased rowing.

"Do you hear?"

"Eyes and limbs!" said Martin. "I hear the dip of oars."

"So do I," said Joseph.

"And coming this way too. Look—look!"

There was a crackling noise, and then the faint flash of a light was visible for a moment. It was in the hands of a man in a boat. They saw the face. It was that of Dolan; and in the boat was a square chest, which appeared to sink its after-part deep into the water.

"Dolan!" whispered Joseph. "He escapes with the treasure-chest."

"The villain!"

With the lantern placed upon the chest in front of him in the boat, Dolan rowed slowly and steadily toward the cutter.

They all kept their eyes fixed upon Dolan, and they saw him make way right to the side of the cutter; and then, in the deep stillness of the night they heard him whisper:

"Benjamin! Benjamin! 'Hoy! III, there! It is time!"

All was still, as well it might be on board the Rift; and then Dolan spoke again:

"It is time, I say. Come now—I am ready. Come and help me as we agreed."

"Ah!" whispered Martin, "I see now. 'Benjamin was to help him to escape. Keep close.'"

They kept their boat quite close to the side of the cliff; but had they remained out in the open water of the sea-cave, it is very doubtful if Dolan would have seen them, as the little kind of halo of light that his lantern sent about left all beyond that limited circle in the most profound darkness.

They saw him then stand up in the boat, and look over the bulwarks of the cutter by clinging to its side and scrambling up a foot or two. Then he dropped into the boat again and began slowly to pull away from the Rift. Suddenly he paused. Something had attracted his observation in the water. Our friends from their boat, too, saw that something.

"What is that?" whispered Gerald.

"Hush! Nothing."

"Ah! I see now. Benjamin."

"His body. He is drowned! See! Dolan knows him now."

They saw Dolan bow over the side of his boat and turn the body over, so that the face was visible, and then he at once recognized Benjamin.

He did not say one word, but bent to the oars, and pulled quickly to the mouth of the cavern.

There was one part of the sails that closed the entrance, which could easily be pushed aside so as to allow a boat to pass out, and it was toward that part that Dolan rowed.

He was evidently escaping with a treasure-chest from the cavern; and then Martin said to Joseph:

"Shall we stop him?"

"No," interposed Gerald. "Let him go. He cannot go far."

"Who knows? He may have some cutter or schooner waiting for him in the offing; and, before daylight may be far enough off. It seems a hard thing to let him go so easily."

"I cannot control you," sighed Gerald. "Do as you please."

Grace crept closer to Gerald.

"No," said Joseph to Martin. "Let us land our cargo here first, and then I have something to say to you. Dolan will only go to the cottage to-night you may depend upon that. I have been on the lookout till within the last hour, and there is nothing in the offing waiting for him. Besides, we can watch his course. If he goes seaward, let us overhail him. If he doubles the point we shall know he goes to the cottage."

"Be it so."

Dolan reached the opening of the sea-cave into the bay. He put aside the sail-cloth and rowed out into the open water.

"Now, pull away with a will," said Joseph; "we shall soon see what course he intends to take."

They were through the opening in the sail-cloth in another minute; and then they saw Dolan making evidently for the promontory, on the other side of which was the bit of coast on which stood the cottages.

"That is it," said Joseph. "He is not quite off yet. Now for the ravine in the cliff."

"Ay, ay," said Martin; "and it's just as well, Joseph, that you and I now know where Dolan's strong-box is."

"Hush!"

"What now?"

"Do you see that dark object out yonder, southward?"

"Ahem! A schooner!"

"You did not see it from your lookout, Joseph."

"I did not."

"Boat ahoy!"

So sudden was this challenge, that both Martin and Joseph were completely nonplused by it; and they heard the vigorous strokes of a pair or more of oars, in their immediate vicinity, before they could make up their minds what to do.

"Pull back," said Martin. "It won't do! No, not to the cave!"

"Boat ahoy! We will fire into you if you don't lay to. Boat ahoy!"

"Friends!" cried Gerald, in a loud voice. "Who hails?"

"Revenue!"

"Ah!" said Captain Mocquet.

"Now, you've been and gone and done it, Master Gerald," said Martin. "It's a coast-guard boat."

Another moment, and a boat-hook gave the little boat of the Rift a vigorous pull, and she was alongside a long galley, in which were some ten or twelve men.

"What's all this about," said a voice; "and why are you cruising in the bay at such an hour as this?"

Gerald was puzzled to know what to say—and so was Martin—for a variety of emotions were busy at the hearts of both of them. Gerald had never for a moment contemplated—as one of the incidents of his and Grace's escape from the caverns in the cliff; and from Dolan—that they were to betray the smugglers' haunt.

And Martin and Joseph had the greatest possible dislike to committing the crew of the Rift, as a whole, to Dolan's villainies. Captain Mocquet, too, ran a great risk of being got into serious trouble, if he should fall into the hands of the English authorities.

"Are you all dumb?" said the voice again.

"Bring a lantern forward here?"

"Ay, sir."

It was then that a most unexpected ally stepped, so to speak, to the rescue; and Mr. Suffles said at once:

"Lieutenant Anderson, I think—"

"Hilloa! Who's that?"

"I, sir! I, Mr. Suffles, attorney-at-law, of Queen street. Don't you know my voice, sir?"

"Yes, I do. What on earth brings you at this time of night at sea, Mr. Suffles?"

"Why, sir, my two little girls have had a fancy, you see, to come."

"Your two little girls? Oh—ah! I see. The young ladies are with you. Well, Mr. Suffles, if I didn't know you for a respectable man, and that you had your two little girls with you, I should almost think you were smuggling."

"Oh, dear, no! My dears, you won't see it."

"See what?"

"The moon in the caves."

"Oh, that's it, is it! Ha! ha! Well, Mr. Suffles, you and your family are very much more romantic than I thought you all were. Good-night. I can tell you, boatmen, though, that there's a squall brewing."

The revenue galley disappeared in the darkness.

"Thank you, Mr. Suffles," said Martin.

"Oh, don't mention it. Business, you know, is business. I'm ever so much better; and if Dolan goes off, and you, Mr. Martin, set up in the same line of business, I hope you won't forget your very humble servant, Charles Olympus Defrain Suffles, Esq., who will be only too happy to purchase any cargo of you on reasonable terms."

"Oh, you will, will you?" said the voice of Lieutenant Anderson. "I thought we should have you some day, Mr. Suffles. You have long been suspected. You are my prisoner, sir, and all in this boat."

CHAPTER XX.

THE CHASE OF DOLAN—A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

WHEN Captain Morton gave chase to Dolan in the boat of the Nautilus, it was soon very evident that the accurate knowledge which the smuggler captain had of every set, every ripple, and every eddy of the tide, gave him a great advantage.

Notwithstanding the utmost exertions of Captain Morton, Dolan succeeded in reaching the promontory and in rounding it, at least five minutes before Captain Morton.

The first thing, then, that Morton saw when his own boat rounded the promontory was the boat that Dolan had gone off in, floating, bottom upward, on the surface of the sea, and one of the cars a few yards from it.

Captain Morton paused a moment or two, and then he said to the sailor who was with him:

"Let us right the boat. The rascal may be beneath it yet. I have heard of such things."

The boat was righted, but no signs of Captain Dolan were visible. Then Captain Morton looked carefully about him, but there was nothing to be seen

but the bare rock and waters of the bay, and the rugged cliffs.

"To the cottage—to the cottage!" he said; and then he and his companion pulled back again to the cottage on the beach; and as they beached their boat, they saw that there was a great commotion among the women and children who inhabited the huts.

A captain's guard of marines was on the spot, and the moment Morton landed, he was surrounded by several of the marines and a sergeant.

"What is all this?" he said.

"Our orders, sir, are to make prisoners of all who land here."

"Very well. Where is your officer?"

"In the cottage, sir. March!"

Captain Morton soon reached the cottage, and was met at the door by the captain of the marines, to whom he said:

"Your men, sir, have very properly, no doubt, in pursuance of their orders, made me prisoner; but I am Captain Morton of the United States Navy, and that is my yacht, the Nautilus, yonder."

"Sir, I am delighted to make your acquaintance. Admiral Clifford is much concerned about you. A conflict took place last night here between some smugglers and the coast-guard, and I have had orders to hold these cottages as a port, and arrest all cruisers who cannot give an account of themselves."

"Sir, is there a female in this cottage—Mrs. Wagner?"

"There was."

"Was?"

"Yes. She has been marched off to jail, I fancy, as it is found she was in league with the man Dolan, who is now clearly ascertained to be a smuggler, and to command and own a cutter, called the Rift."

"Will you pardon me, sir? I must seek this woman at once, as she is in possession of information so important to my peace, that the whole object of my journey to England hangs upon it. Did you say to jail, sir, they had taken her?"

"I fancy so. A couple of revenue officers took her. There are several of them at the upper end of the lanes, and they can doubtless tell you about it."

"Pardon my abruptness—good-day, sir."

The officers bowed, and Captain Morton hastened up the narrow lane that led toward the town; but when he gained the top of it, he was informed that Mrs. Wagner was conveyed, in a sinking state, to the common county jail, which was some five miles off. With a sigh for the delay that all this occasioned him, Captain Morton started off on the road indicated to him, and from a bit of rising ground which he soon reached, he was able to see a long way about him, and he could not refrain from casting a glance both seaward and landward as he proceeded.

While looking landward he perceived a coach coming toward him, by a cross-road, which had an escort of mounted men in police uniform.

Captain Morton had not proceeded another quarter of a mile, when he suddenly heard the tramp of horses' feet and the sound of wheels, and from a lane there emerged, almost close upon him, the coach and its mounted police escort.

So close did the vehicle come to him, that Captain Morton thought it would be a good opportunity to ask if the lane from which the carriage emerged was a near route to the county jail.

"Will this lead me to the county jail?" he asked, loudly. And hardly had the words escaped his lips, when there was a scream from the interior of the carriage, and no other than Mrs. Wagner put her head out at the window, despite the opposition of a police officer who was inside, and called out:

"Stop—stop! It is the gentleman with the little flag. I must speak to him. Stop—stop!"

Captain Morton at once rushed to the window of the carriage, calling out to her, aloud:

"Tell me—oh! tell me at once—where can I seek for my child? Speak to me—tell me at once, and your reward shall be none the less."

"The cliff—the cavern."

"What cliff—what cavern?"

"Hello!" said the sergeant, who was with the party of police. "I don't think I ought to allow this. We are taking our prisoner before the magistrates. That is to say, to Sir Thomas Clifford; for she says she has something to tell about the smugglers of the coast."

"I know Sir Thomas Clifford. I am Captain Morton, and that is my yacht, the Nautilus, in the roads yonder. This woman can give me information that is to me life itself, and I beg you will permit me to question her."

"I will tell all," said Mrs. Wagner. "I will tell all. He is going to tell something, but I will tell all."

"Who is he?"

"Dolan."

"I saw him—I chased him, but he escaped me."

"As he was sure to do. Come, sir, I will tell you all—give me the little flag that you said I should have till I had the thousand pounds."

"Well, sir," said the sergeant, "if you are a friend of the admiral's you may as well come with us; and he will do as he thinks proper in the matter. You see, sir, we were taking her to the county jail, for the present; but when she said that she would tell all about the smugglers, we thought it better to turn about, and take her to the Port Admiral."

"I will go with you."

"Very well, sir. You dismount, Jennings; you can go off duty for the present. If you don't mind riding one of our troop horses, sir, here is one at your disposal."

"Thank you."

Captain Morton was mounted in a moment.

"My thousand pounds!" screamed Mrs. Wagner—"my thousand pounds! I will tell nothing without my thousand pounds!"

"Be assured, that if I recover my daughter through your means," said Captain Morton, "you shall have the thousand pounds. I have given my word, and it is not one that was ever yet broken."

"Forward!" cried the sergeant of police.

The cavalcade started forward; and then, as the coach halted up a hill, Captain Morton, who rode in front with the sergeant of police, reached the summit of it, and glancing over the downs, he saw a throng of persons on foot.

"Who are those people?" he said.

"Those with some of our men? Oh, yes! I heard of them. The preventives last night, under Lieutenant Anderson's orders, made a capture of smugglers.

They kept them at the station yonder, where you see the flag flying, all night, and then sent to us for an escort!"

"They are prisoners, then?"

"Yes, sir; smugglers."

Little did Captain Morton guess, that in the midst of that little throng of persons was to be found his own daughter, Grace, whose image so filled his heart, and concerning whom he was at that very moment enduring an amount of anxiety that made it difficult for him to assume even the outward appearance of ordinary composure.

But so it was.

When the preventive galley captured the boat, in which was Mrs. Suffles and the little party who had escaped from the cavern, the lieutenant in command had refused to listen to any statements or explanations, but resolved to give the whole of them up to the town authorities.

It was in vain that both Martin and Joseph protested that Captain Mocquet was a French trading-captain, and had nothing to do with Dolan on the Rift, and that his daughters Marie and Grace could not be smugglers.

They both made a strenuous effort, too, to get the lieutenant to set Gerald at liberty.

In reply to all this, the only proposition the lieutenant made was in a few words, when they reached the beach.

"The two girls may go," he said, "where they like. All others I keep."

Grace, on the instant, laid her hand softly on the arm of Gerald, as she said:

"No, no—with you, Gerald!"

Captain Mocquet held his daughter close to his heart.

"Non, non. We shall—what you say in one proverb *An laise!*—always go to one sink and swim there together. Ah?"

Then the captured party, amid the wallings of Mr. Suffles, were conducted to the preventive station, and in the morning, as Captain Morton saw them, were escorted to the town.

"It is a good job," said the sergeant, "that something seems to have set the smuggling fraternity by the ears, and they seem anxious one to tell of the other. I fancy the end of it will be the rooting out of the whole of it."

"It's probable," said Captain Morton.

A sharp ride now of about a quarter of an hour brought the coach, with Mrs. Wagner and the American captain, to the door of Admiral Clifford's house.

But while all this is going on, a strange scene was being enacted in the caverns of the cliff.

When Dolan had so mysteriously eluded the pursuit of Captain Morton, he had done so with the double object of getting out of the way of one who, if he had but once got a clutch at him, would have been the least likely man in all the world to let him go again, and with a view of affording no clew to the secret of the cavern in the cliff.

Hence, then, Dolan took advantage of those few moments when he had doubled the headland, and was out of sight of Captain Morton, to scramble on to the rocks, after upsetting the boat; and he concealed himself amid such a mass of seaweed, that nothing short of actually landing, and treading upon him, could have enabled any one to find him.

Dolan was a bold and good swimmer, and no sooner had he felt assured that Captain Morton had given up the pursuit of him, than he launched himself into the bay, and made his way with the tide for the cavern in the cliff.

As he swam, Dolan reflected upon the present prospect of his affairs, and felt anything but satisfied with them, although he was far from knowing or suspecting the whole of his danger.

It now seemed to strike the villain that no one but himself would or could expose the secret of the cavern in the cliff.

In the little chest that he had taken away so secretly in the boat from the cave, he had the bulk of the plunder that should have been, by agreement, divided among the crew of the Rift, and that he had buried in the little garden of the cottage, unknown even to Mrs. Wagner.

It was to the cavern, then, that Dolan took his way, still with several beliefs in his mind, which the facts themselves by no means warranted.

He fully believed that both Gerald and Grace were in the cavern.

He fully believed that Captain Mocquet was a prisoner in the cabin of the Rift; and he fully believed that, when night should come again, and he should go to the cottage, he would find Mrs. Wagner repentant, and ready to make what excuses she could for her conduct—since he was resolved, so soon as he should visit the cavern, to put it out of her power to take Grace away, by securing the young girl in some of the secret recesses of the cliff.

There were many matters still at the cavern which Dolan wished to settle. There were valuables, too, which he wished to take away with him; and when he reached the canvas covering to the sea-cave, and disappeared beneath it, he had the conviction on his mind that he still had power, and that he was in no very great danger.

But there was one thing that he had done which he hardly liked to think of to himself.

He had taken the most important step he could in the betrayal of his comrades; he had written to Admiral Clifford, and, at the very moment that Dolan was swimming over the cool waters of the little bay, the admiral was reading a letter, of which the following is a transcript:

"To ADMIRAL SIR THOMAS CLIFFORD—

"SIR:—It is well known that the captain of a smuggling cutter that has long infested this coast lies very near your heart. You know, sir, that that vessel has been seen under many disguises, and that it has got the better, by fair means and by foul, of all the craft sent in search of it.

"I, sir, intend now to give her up to you; and, if it should ever happen that I get into misfortune, I hope that, when I send to you, and say to you that it was I who wrote you this letter, and enabled you to capture the smuggling cutter, you will be my friend.

"But that may never happen.

"If to-night, at just the turn of the tide (the ebb, I mean, which will be at a quarter past two), you have the Spray, or any other vessel, in the offing, by the number four buoy, you will find a cutter, with a

very large squaresail, making her way out to sea from the bay, by the land-slip.

"Do not speak her—listen to nothing any one on board of her says; but board her at once, and take her, and you will be in possession of the much-talked-of smuggling vessel, and all the crew except me.

"Among that crew, sir, are some of the most determined rascals on the face of the earth.

"There is one in particular, a mere boy, whom they name Gerald. It was he who insisted on firing at the Spray, in spite of all I could say to him to the contrary; and as the worst part of the crew were rather mutinous, I could not prevent him. He has committed several murders, and if the gallows is not his portion, it will be defrauded.

"On this information you may rely.

"I was almost forgetting to say, that next to this boy, Gerald (who, by the way, is none of mine), the two worst men in the cutter are named Martin and Joseph.

"Let Gerald, Martin, and Joseph be prosecuted, and hung. I dare say some of the crew will turn king's evidence against them."

This was the precious epistle which came anonymously to the hands of the admiral; and it was for the purpose of carrying out the details of it, that Captain Dolan, so soon as he reached the sea-cavern, and scrambled onto the deck of the Rift, blew his whistle, to summon about him the smuggler crew.

His intention was, clearly and distinctly, to get them all out of the cavern by the sea-opening on board the Rift, leaving him with Grace alone there; and then he intended to take the girl out by the opening into the ravine, and make his escape, overland, as quickly as he could, after taking from the cottage the plunder which he had buried.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PORT ADMIRAL RECEIVES PRISONERS AND VISITORS.

It was considerably in advance of the little party, which comprised his daughter, Grace, in its members, that Captain Morton arrived at the house of Admiral Sir Thomas Clifford, with Mrs. Wagner.

Sir Thomas was, in fact, pondering over the letter he had received from Dolan, and wondering what he had better do in the matter—for he feared it was a snare altogether—when Captain Morton was announced to him.

The welcome of Sir Thomas Clifford was warm and friendly, and in reply to Morton's apologetic expressions for leaving him so abruptly, he said:

"My dear friend, say not a word about it. You were quite right and quite justified, and I am in hope that you have something of a satisfactory nature to tell me."

"But little. I am as one in possession of a sealed book, within which may be all the information he seeks, but which he lacks the means of opening."

"How so, captain?" said the admiral.

Thereupon, Captain Morton told Sir Thomas Clifford all that had passed since he had seen him, and of the capture and presence of Mrs. Wagner.

The admiral listened with the greatest interest, and then he said:

"It was through the information, Captain Morton, you bore brought me, and which you had got from that dying man, Hutchins, that we have been enabled to do what we have done against this Dolan and his gang. Read this letter, and it will let you into another phase of this transaction, and one which may possibly be productive of important results."

Captain Morton read the letter with the most absorbing interest, and then he said:

"This is from Dolan?"

"Doubtless, although it is anonymous. There is abundance of evidence on that head. What do you think of it?"

"That the rascal intends to make his own escape, and leave all his companions to the law."

"Yes, and the probability is, that he is off already."

"It is more than likely. But now, admiral, I am a father—my heart is riven with distress. I have suffered so many shocks of late, that I am getting weak-hearted. I implore you to assist me in the recovery of my child, at once. I think this woman, Wagner, knows where she is. Will you procure her safety and indemnity, if she discloses that secret to me?"

"I will do my utmost, for, as I have before told you, I, too, am a bereaved father."

"You have hinted as much."

"Yes, my boy—my poor boy! Stolen from me, years and years ago, by whom I know not—hardly in fact, know how, so confused and heart-stricken am I at times about it. Believe me, Captain Morton, although I have long since given up all hope of ever seeing my own child, I will use every possible energy and power I possess to restore you yours."

Captain Morton thanked the admiral by a pressure of the hand, which said much more than words could do; and then the admiral rung the bell, and the sailor-servant made his appearance.

"Where have the police placed the prisoner they brought with them?"

"North by east."

"Oh! the red room, you mean?"

"Ay, ay, sir! She came in under conveyance, sir, and now that Mr. Tickley has come into port."

"What, Mr. Tickley, the magistrate?"

"Yes, admiral, you see, sir, the master-at-arms."

"The who?"

"Lord, sir, don't mind me! Whenever I see a policeman, I think of the master-at-arms; 'cos you see, admiral, that's the sort of policeman on board ship; and, commonly speaking, a more sneaking, shore-going, lubberly rascal, there isn't between the planks, than that same master-at-arms. Lord love you, gentlemen, there was a fellow—who was a master-at-arms on board of our ship, once, and a more murdering rogue couldn't be."

"Well, well, that will do. Say to Mr. Tickley, that I should be glad to see him here."

"Ay, ay, sir."

In a few moments, a little sharp-visaged man was shown into the room; and having a peculiarity of bowing sideways, it imparted an oddity to his manner, that very much engaged the attention of strangers.

"Glad to see you, admiral. Your servant, sir. In the commission of the peace, sir, eh?"

"No, Mr. Tickley. This is an American gentleman. Mr. Tickley—Captain Morton."

"Glad to see you, sir; very glad to see you, sir, indeed. Well, admiral, the sergeant sent for me, I suppose, to make a court with you, on some matters?"

"Yes—no doubt. As we are both magistrates, we can act together. There is a woman in custody, charged with complicity in a case of smuggling. She is in possession of information that this gentleman wants, and I want, as the price of that information, to let her go."

"Hem!"

"You know, Mr. Tickley, we always have, where women and men were jointly concerned in smuggling affairs, let the women go."

"Yes, but—ahem! This woman is alone—"

A tap came at the door of the room.

"Come in."

The sergeant of police approached, and saluted the admiral.

"More prisoners, sir, sent in by Lieutenant Anderson, who took them in a boat in the bay, last night. The lieutenant will be here, sir, in about half an hour."

"Men? Men among them?"

"Yes, admiral."

"Very good. That will do. Mr. Tickley, that disposes of your little objection." The admiral placed a stress on the word "little," for which Captain Morton thanked him by a look.

"Well, well, admiral, I have no particular objection—none in the world—only one don't like dangerous precedents, but I'm sure to oblige this gentleman (here Mr. Tickley made one of his odd side-bows.) I would do much—much. Suppose you see her here, admiral, and she may say at once what this gentleman" (here came another of the oblique bows) "requires."

The admiral and Captain Morton both willingly acceded to this suggestion, and Mrs. Wagner, between two of the police, was ushered into the room. The moment she saw Captain Morton, she called out:

"My thousand pounds—give me my thousand pounds, sir—I want my thousand pounds!"

"What does she mean?" said Mr. Tickley.

"Simply," said Captain Morton, "that I told her I would give her a thousand pounds, if she brought me my daughter, of whose place of retreat or concealment I believe her to be aware."

"Give me my money!" cried Mrs. Wagner, "and let me go."

"Silence, woman," said the admiral, sternly. "What you are brought here for is, to be committed to prison, by myself and my brother magistrate, here, for your ascertained complicity in the smuggling transactions of Dolan."

"Dolan? Dolan? Who said Dolan?"

"I did. But if you at once state where Captain Morton's daughter is to be found, I will not make out the order for your committal, and if she be restored to the captain, in safety, through your information, I will let you go free, eh, Mr. Tickley?"

"Hem! ah, yes!"

"And my thousand pounds?" said Mrs. Wagner.

"You shall have them!" said Captain Morton.

Mrs. Wagner looked eagerly from one to the other of the party, and then she said:

"Let me fetch the child. I will bring her here in two hours. Let me go for her!"

"The captain will be content, if you tell him where to go for her," said the admiral.

"Yes," cried Captain Morton.

"No," said Mrs. Wagner, "you will not get her—you could not get her. I only can get her."

There was a pause of doubt.

"You failed before, said Captain Morton."

"Dolan stopped me; he overheard me promise you and he stopped me. That was how it was. Let me go, though, and I will bring the girl."

"Where is she?"

"Listen," said Mrs. Wagner, in a solemn tone of voice; "listen, and I will tell you all. There is a sea-cave in the cliff, where now the cutter lies at anchor. The whole cliff is full of caverns and passages in the rock, and there is but one entrance from the sea, and another, a small hole, among the weeds and shrubs, in the narrow road that leads from the beach to the top of the cliff. There are holes in the face of the cliff high up, which they use as lookout stations; but those can't be got at in any way except from within the cliff."

"But you speak nonsense," said the admiral. "How can the cutter lie in a sea-cave, and we not see it?"

"Over the entrance to the cave there is drawn a mass of old sails, all soaked in chalk, and discolored with sea-weed and sea-water. You might sail past them in a boat within fifty feet, and not know the difference between them and the rock itself."

"Can this be possible?"

"It is so. You may know the place, for it is exactly under the old flag-staff on the cliff top."

"The old staff that has stood so long, because nobody will risk their lives by going to take it down—the portion of cliff on which it stands is so undercut?"

"Yes, that is it. Immediately beneath that, springing from the water's edge, is the covered entrance to the sea-cave, where Dolan and the lieutenant and all his crew are now, and where she took refuge from the Spray."

"It must be so."

"It is so, sir."

"And that," added the admiral, "then at once accounts for the disappearance of the cutter amid the smoke of her own guns and those of the Spray. Well, it was not altogether so very absurd of Captain Grey to think he had sunk her—she slipped into her sea-cave."

"She did. She lies there now; and there, Captain Morton, is your child Grace. And there, too—"

Mrs. Wagner smiled.

"What would you say?"

"We shall see—one at a time. There are other fish in the sea besides one worth a thousand pounds. It's well to have two strings to one's bow, and to hide the second one—ha! ha! I feel quite safe now I think of it."

"Come, come, woman," said Mr. Tickley; "no levity here, if you please."

"You hold your tongue, sir," said Mrs. Wagner—who appeared to feel herself mistress of the situation—"you hold your tongue, sir, and go and cheat the poor men in your chalk-pits, by making them take bad soap and bad flour—moldy, sir—and bad candles, and bad cheese, as a good part of their wages. Go along do."

"This is all irrelevant," said the admiral. "Come in."

A tap had come to the door of the room.

The sergeant of police appeared with a slip of paper in his hands.

"Beg pardon, gentlemen, but this is the list of the prisoners Lieutenant Anderson has brought in, and he is in the dining-room below."

"Are the prisoners there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ask Lieutenant Anderson to do me the favor of stepping this way. Let me see the list?"

"Yes, admiral."

Admiral Sir Thomas Clifford took the list in his hand, and commenced reading:

"Nominal list of persons arrested in a boat on the high seas by Lieutenant Anderson, R. N., and commanding the C. G. at Falmouth station."

"SIMON MARTIN, seaman."

"JOSEPH RATLIN, seaman."

"CHARLES OLYMPUS DEFRAIN SUFFLES, Attorney-at-Law."

"CAPTAIN EDOUARDE DE MOUQUET, French merchant-service."

"GERALD (this person refuses to give his surname, on the plea that he does not know it). He is believed to be a son of Captain Dolan the smuggler."

The admiral looked up.

"That, Captain Morton, is the young ruffian who is spoken of in Dolan's letter; and now it appears he likewise repudiates Dolan as a father, as Dolan repudiates him as a son."

"Yes, admiral."

"That boy, Gerald," said Mrs. Wagner, "is a bad boy; oh! a most wicked boy; and if any one ought to be sent to prison, he ought. He is the worst of the lot."

"Everybody seems to concur in that," said the admiral. "You may depend upon it, justice shall be done. I think, Mr. Tickley, we had better go down and sit magisterially upon all this. Oh, Mr. Anderson, how are you?"

"I hope you are quite well, admiral," said Lieutenant Anderson, as he entered the room. "I never in all my experience made so strange a capture as that of last night; and I think we have got hold of a worse man than any smuggler."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, the receiver of the smuggled goods, Mr. Suffles, a respectable (!) attorney of the town. Upon my word, it's past all belief almost, and we should not now have had him, but for his own imprudence."

"I wish to Heaven," said the admiral, rising, "that this was a free port. I do detest the constant trouble that these smuggling cases give us."

"So do I, sir; but what would you? Duty is duty, you know, admiral."

"Oh yes, Mr. Anderson, you are right. I think, Mr. Tickley, our shortest way will be, to commit them all to the assizes."

"Very good, admiral, and those who have done worse than smuggle—"

"Are there any?"

"Lord bless you, yes. They have fired on the Spray—a king's ship. That's piracy."

"It is. Well, we shall see."

"I think, though, admiral," said the lieutenant, "with deference to you, sir, that the two girls might be let go."

"Two girls?"

"Yes, sir, and the Frenchman. He seems a harmless man enough, and was in port a prisoner of the smugglers."

"What two girls?"

"On the boat, sir."

"Oh! I overlooked them. Let me see. Oh yes. Dear me, I omitted their names. Ah—hem. Marie Mocquet, daughter of Captain Mocquet."

"A mere girl, sir."

"Oh! very well. Let her go."

"Yes, sir. And the other?"

"Grace, likewise refusing her surname on the same plea as the youth, Gerald, but believed to be a daughter of Dolan, the smuggler."

With a cry that drew unusual attention to him, Captain Morton sprang from his chair, and a bright flush spread itself over his face, as he said, in a voice that was musical and rich with feeling:

"Again, again! or do I dream! That name and description again, admiral?"

"Grace."

"Enough! Oh! it is enough. God be thanked now. Oh! now and ever—my heart speaks to me—my child—my own—my beautiful! It was the voice of Nature that spoke to me in the air she breathed. I have felt as if her little hand rested on my heart. She is here—my own little one—my child—long lost—Oh God, how long lost! how long mourned, Grace, Grace? Your father—your own father calls you—my child—my own dear one! Oh Heaven have mercy upon me, and save me from the cold chill of hope deferred, now, Grace—Grace, my child—my child. To your own fond father's heart!"

Captain Morton had dashed from the room, and they heard him crying still to Grace, as they all tumultuously followed him to the great dining-hall of the admiral's mansion.

It was a spacious and magnificent apartment. The superb hangings and old family portraits gave it a regal air, and strange was the aspect it now presented.

In a little group at one end were the prisoners, who had been taken by Lieutenant Anderson and several of the country constabulary were between them and the door—that door which was now flung open, and through which, with tears of joy and expectation in his eyes, and his arms outstretched, rushed Captain Morton.

"Grace! Grace! my child—my own dear child—your father—your—your own father."

A mist of tears were before him, and then he heard a cry, and in a moment his child was clashed to his heart, and with hysterical sobs and little screams, Grace felt indeed that she was in her father's arms.

Then was there a deep stillness in the room, for all were affected by the exquisite pathos of that meeting between the father and daughter, as they stood clasped in each other's embrace.

Captain Morton bent over her, and his tears fell fast as he kissed her tenderly.

"My Grace—my own dear—my darling girl!"

"Father—father! And I have I, indeed, a father?"

"A fond, dear father, my child. God's blessing on you. Ah, I can see your poor mother's eyes—my own little one. Oh! this is joy—joy beyond all price."

The admiral then spoke very gently.

"From my inmost heart, my dear sir, I congratulate you."

"And I, too, sir," said Lieutenant Anderson.

"Dear me," said Mr. Tickley, "it's quite affecting. The feelings of respectable people and men of means should always be respected. Hem! always."

Then a light hand was placed on the arm of Grace and a soft voice said:

"Here is the little parcel that you brought from the cave, Grace, dear."

"Gerald!" she shrieked, as she heard that voice. "Gerald! and did I for one moment forget you, my own dear—dear Gerald?"

She disengaged one arm from her father's embrace, and flung it round Gerald's neck, and drew him toward her, and kissed his forehead.

Then Marie started forward, and with two little screams she stood before Grace, and stamped her foot upon the floor; and then, after a struggle to say something, she burst into tears.

"What is all this?" said the admiral. "Gerald, did you say, my dear? Is this the Gerald—the bad Gerald?"

"The young pirate," said Lieutenant Anderson.

"The one that fired on the Spray," said Mr. Tickley.

"The worst of the whole lot," added the sergeant of police.

Poor Gerald looked from one to the other like a person in a dream.

"No—no. Oh, God, no!" he gasped. "What is all this?"

"My Gerald," said Grace.

"Your Gerald, my dear?" said Captain Morton.

"Yes, father, dear ever—dearer now—God bless him!"

Marie flung herself into her father's arms and sobbed tumultuously.

"There must be some mistake here," said the admiral.

"No—no," said Grace. "Oh, father, you do not know. One moment. Let me show you that I am indeed your daughter, or let me hear you say that it is not so, and that I have still a father to seek. Oh! no—no, my heart tells me."

"And mine, too, my darling child."

"Yet, see, father. In this little parcel, there are things that Mrs. Hutchins told me always to preserve; and so, when I came away from the cavern, I brought them with me: see, father, some child's clothes and little ornaments of gold and coral."

The few well-saved things strayed on to the floor from the parcel, and then Grace looked up into the eyes of Captain Morton, into which fresh tears had come.

"There needed not this evidence," he said. "And yet so well do I know all these things—my own dear, lost child!"

Grace again nestled close to her father's heart.

"Oh! how weak I am," said Captain Morton.

"Pray, pardon me, all here present; but it is not often that the more deeply-hidden feelings of Nature are thus stirred. You should have all suffered what I have; and then you should feel the joy that I feel, and you would pardon these tears."

"They are very honest tears," said the admiral.

"There is only one thing, my dear Captain Morton, that would give me the pleasure that this recovery of your long-lost child has given me, and that is, what will never happen."

"Never, admiral?"

"Never. The recovery of my own boy."

The admiral turned aside, and shrouded his eyes with his hands, and then Gerald said:

"Ah, sir, do not despair. Heaven is so good!"

The admiral started.

"Who spoke?"

"I, sir."

The admiral looked gently at him.

"I am sorry for you."

"No, said Grace. "No—no."

"No, my dear? I told indeed I am."

"Then, sir, you should not, for one should only be sorry for the wicked. Gerald is too good to be sorry for. Father, I know Gerald well. He has been my companion—my friend—my brother. He shall be all that still."

"My dear child—"

"No—no. Oh! no, father. Do not you condemn him. Do not break my heart by condemning Gerald. He is innocent. He is most innocent. You do not know him, father—you cannot know him. He is innocent."

There was an ominous silence for a few moments, and then Lieutenant Anderson said in a low, anxious voice:

"I do not place much reliance upon what is called king's evidence; but we have a man here who is named Thomas Wright, who offers to tell all."

"Thomas Wright!" exclaimed Martin, who had hitherto been a silent and wondering spectator of all that had taken place. "Why, he was one of the worst of Dolan's crew!"

"One of the very worst!" said Joseph.

CHAPTER XXII.

GERALD'S DANGER AND GRACE'S RESOLUTION.

THE party now in the great dining-hall of the Port Admiral's mansion presented some of the most singular aspects that could well be imagined.

There was the admiral himself, by some mysterious influences keeping close to Gerald, and even resting his hand upon his shoulder; and there was Grace and her newly-found father—she with one arm round her father's left arm, and the other hand clasped in one of Gerald's.

Then there was Lieutenant Anderson, with rather a puzzled look upon his face; and close to him stood the sergeant of police, with one hand upon the lock of a door, and an inquiring look about his eyes to the lieutenant.

At some distance off stood Captain Mocquet, with Marie clasped against his breast and her face hidden.

And a little further still were Martin, and Joseph, and Mr. Suffles—the latter looking very rueful indeed.

When both Martin and Joseph spoke in this way, Grace looked gratefully at them and tightened for a moment her hold of Gerald's hand, as though she would say:

"Never fear; the right will yet prevail. Be of good heart, Gerald."

And Gerald quite understood the sentiment implied by that gentle pressure of the hand; and something like a disdainful, as well as loving smile, lit up his face.

"Then," said the admiral to Martin and Joseph, "you both exonerate this lad?"

"We do, admiral. He had nothing to do with us, or with the smuggling."

"Very well. I don't think, Mr. Tickley, that we need press hardly on a mere boy."

"My dear sir! You forget—lieutenant, did you not say—sergeant, eh? Who was it? Somebody said there was a witness—a man who had turned king's evidence, eh?"

"I was bound to maintain it," said the lieutenant, in an apologetic tone, as if he would very much rather have left it alone.

"Very good."

"Shall I bring him in, sir?" asked the sergeant.

"To be sure."

"Thomas Wright!" added the sergeant. Then, as he pushed into the hall a ruffianly-looking fellow in the dress of a sailor, and who looked downcast and suspiciously about him—

"Well, now," said Mr. Tickley, at once assuming the office of examining magistrate—"well, now! Hum! Who are you, eh? Come now, speak up; who are you?"

"Thomas Wright."

"Thomas? Thomas, you mean?"

"It's all the same."

"Very well. Hum! Who and what are you?"

"A will'in and a smuggler. I may as well call myself a will'in, 'cos I knows you'll call me one when I says as how I runs goods, blow high, blow low, to you all."

"Come, now, what brings you here?"

"Fifty pounds!—no; I mean to turn king's evidence, and get off myself. I'll tell you all as I knows."

"Well, go on."

"The smuggling-cutter, Rift, will be at sea to-night at about ebb-tide, and you may take her and all in her; and the worst of the gang is that boy, Gerald! That's all."

"That is Dolan's tale," whispered the admiral to Captain Morton. "That is what he says in the letter."

"The same."

"Well, that's conclusive," said Mr. Tickley.

"Not quite," said the admiral. "Answer me, Thomas Wright."

"Bowlon, sir."

"Why is this lad, Gerald, the worst of all?"

"Lord bless you, sir! 'cos you see we would all on us have given in to the Spray; but he wouldn't; and he loaded a twelve-pound carronade as we had on deck, and he fired it at the king's ship."

"That is false!" cried Gerald.

"Oh, you know you did; and Captain Dolan—just to prevent you from doing it ag'in—shut you up in the main-cabin, along o' Mounseer the Frenchman there. You know he did."

"Very conclusive!" said Mr. Tickley.

"No!" said Martin.

"No!" said Joseph.

"Silence! silence! Upon my life! when a magistrate of the county says something, is a prisoner to say no? What's the use, I ask—what's the use of being a man of property if one is to be treated in this way? I ask, what's the use?—and I pause for a reply. I pause—I pause."

No reply came.

"Very good!" added Mr. Tickley, as if the whole of society had tacitly agreed with him. "Very good!"

"I deny the whole of this!" said Gerald. "I deny—"

"Silence!"

"But, Mr. Tickley," said the admiral, "as this lad is accused of what may affect his life, I say it seems but fair that he should be allowed to speak in his own defense if he please."

"Oh, very well—very well. Give him rope—give him rope."

"Now speak," said Grace.

Marie looked up.

"My answer," said Gerald, "is simply this: I was by actual force taken on board the Rift on her last voyage. I now know the object of that proceeding: it was to commit me, if possible, to the general criminality of Dolan and his crew. By force I was brought upon deck, and by force it was endeavored to make me fire a gun. Even that did not succeed and I was consigned to the cabin again; but during the whole time I was with Dolan I was his prisoner—not his associate or comrade, or taking part with him on board the Rift. I was trying to escape from him last night."

"Yes," said Grace, "and he helped me to escape."

"Et moi!" said Mocquet, placing his hand upon his heart and making a graceful bow.

"That is conclusive!" said the admiral, in imitation of the phrase that Mr. Tickley had used.

"Oh, dear—no!" said Mr. Tickley; "and as we are divided in opinion you know, admiral, the prisoner is committed to the Assizes; that is always the rule."

"But this is no court," said Lieutenant Anderson.

"All this is irregular."

"So it is!" said the admiral; "so it is. We can do nothing with the boy."

"Then we will make a court," said Mr. Tickley; "and I call upon you, Admiral Sir Thomas Clifford, as a respectable man, a magistrate and a gentleman of undoubted means, to act with me. Sergeant, make a court."

"Father! father!" said Grace; "you speak—you speak for Gerald. I tell you he is innocent."

"I think so, my dear child. Admiral, I fancy you are of the same opinion as myself respecting this lad's innocence—are you not?"

"Indeed, I am!"

"But I am not; and I protest,"—said Mr. Tickley

"I protest against his being let go."

"Then," said the admiral, "let the case stand adjourned until to-morrow, when we may be in possession of the whole of the smugglers, and when a full bench of magistrates can be got together."

"Very good. Commit the prisoner—that is, remand him, I mean."

"And these gentlemen?" said the sergeant, indicating Martin and Joseph, and Captain Mocquet and Marie.

"Remand them all."

"Very well," added the admiral. "Until to-morrow at one o'clock be it."

"Come, young fellow!" said a policeman, laying his hand on the shoulder of Gerald.

"No—no! Oh, no!" cried Grace.

"Oh yes, miss. He must go."

"Then I go likewise."

"My dear!" remonstrated Captain Morton; "you know not what you say. You cannot be taken to prison."

"Prison—prison! Gerald to prison! Oh, father! you do not know him—indeed you do not. My poor Gerald!"

"Be assured, my dear child, that he shall suffer no wrong. The admiral and I will take care of that."

"That we will," said Admiral Clifford. "Let him go now, my dear, and we will see to him."

Grace looked from one to the other and then to Gerald, who said, with a forced smile:

"Let it be so, dear. All will yet be well. Good-by, Grace, we shall soon meet again."

Marie said something hurriedly to her father, and he pointed to Gerald and to the police and said a few words in reply. Then he stepped forward, and making a kind of circular bow, he said:

"Messieurs, one grand mistake. Monsieur Gerald is one innocent. I shall depose and swear at him and his innocence *aujourd'hui*. You have one maxim in *de la Angleterre*: 'Better was it to hang up ten innocent men than one guilty.' I have heard him said in one court *Anglaise* by one great judge—what you call him?—baron-in-chief. Bah! Out, you will let Monsieur Gerald go, for he is innocent."

"Silence!" cried Mr. Tickley.

"Sare?"

"Silence!"

"Sare, I am one Capitaine Française, and I *cartel* you—what you call challenge you in mortal combat. Bah!"

"Boo—bah! Get away. No mortal combat—indeed! A man of my means—absurd!"

"I, sare, am *propriétaire Française*," said Captain Mocquet. "I have at Havre *deux millions* francs."

"What the deuce is *deux millions*? Milton is million; but *deux*? Is it all a do? Ha! ha!"

"He means," said the admiral, "that he is worth two millions."

"What—eh? Two millions—two—bless me. What a very—ahem!—respectable man to be sure! Permit me, my dear sir, to shake hands with you? Two millions! Do you think it true, admiral?"

"I have no doubt of it."

"Then, admiral, in my opinion, a man who has two millions—gracious goodness—what means! A man, admiral, who has two millions cannot be remanded in any civilized country—eh, admiral? Eh, lieutenant—eh?"

The admiral smiled, and so did Gerald; and the former added:

"Let, then, these two men and this lad stand remanded until to-morrow, as well as the woman Wright."

"Where is she?"

"Here, I fancy—no, up-stairs! Where is she?"

There was a rush and a bustle among the police, then it was found that Mrs. Wagner, in the excitement and confusion occasioned by the discovery of Captain Morton's long-lost daughter, had made her escape.

The admiral smiled.

"Let her go."

"But I won't let her go," said Mr. Tickley. "After her sergeant—sergeant! What after her. Catch her if you can, sergeant!"

"Yes, sir."

Once again Gerald and Grace bade each other good-by, and then the police surrounded their prisoners, but the warm heart of Captain Mocquet was not satisfied. He ran up to Gerald and embraced him.

"Be brave, *mon cher* Gerald. I shall fight with Monsieur Tickle, by gar! And as *de proverbe Anglaise* says of himself: 'A long lane is always turning.' Worse luck next time, let us hope always *aujourd'hui*. Adieu!"

"Adieu!" said Marie, gently.

"Police," said the admiral.

"Yes, sir."

"Be sure you take good care of that fellow, Thomas Wright. He will be put upon his oath to-morrow, and if he so much as swears to the slightest thing that is not true, I will prosecute him for perjury, if it cost me a thousand pounds."

Thomas Wright, as he called himself, looked rather cadaverous at this; and as he was removed in custody, he muttered to himself:

"I wish I hadn't come and done it for Dolan; though he did give me fifty pounds and promised me fifty more. I wish I had done the honest right thing, and run away with his fifty pounds, and not come here at all. I shall only get into a scrape—I see that as plain as a captain. I does."

Then Captain Mocquet made another similar bow, and put his daughter's arm beneath his, as he said:

"Adieu, messieurs, adieu! I shall do something for my friend Gerald—I shall do something I have not think of now, but it shall be something. Adieu!"

"My dear Admiral Clifford," said Mr. Suffles.

"Well, sir?"

"Ha! ha! It's a good joke, you know, but you really don't mean to remand me? You see, admiral, that there is no evidence."

"I beg your pardon," said the lieutenant. "I overheard you invite those in the boat to smuggle."

"Oh, that was ironically."

The lieutenant shook his head.

"Very well," said Mr. Suffles, "then I shall bring an action."

"A what?" said Mr. Tickley.

"An action against you, sir."

"And what for, sir?"

"False imprisonment, sir."

"Boo, sir."

"You may cry 'boo!' as much as you like, sir; but as I can get as much law for a penny as you can for a shilling, I'd advise you to lock out, sir."

Mr. Tickley looked serious.

"Admiral!"

"Well."

"I don't think, in my own mind, that there will turn out to be evidence enough to convict Mr. Suffles."

"Nor I either."

"Then I think, admiral, he had better go."

"So far as I am concerned, Mr. Tickley, I do not feel disposed to keep any one who is not part of the crew of the Rift."

"Very good. You may go, Mr. Suffles."

Mr. Suffles darted off on the moment, without saying good-by to anybody.

A few minutes more, and there were no persons in the room but the admiral and Captain Morton and Grace Morton. Then the latter stepped up to the admiral and took his hand, saying, as she did so:

"Sir, you ought not—you cannot doubt of the innocence of poor Gerald."

"I do not, my dear. Be quite at ease about him, for to-morrow, I have no doubt, will clear him. I only wish that I had some sort of positive evidence to produce that would contradict the assertions in the mouth of that Thomas Wright. Dolan himself, too, condemns the lad."

"Dolan?"

"Yes. There is a letter from him. You shall read it; and then, my dear, you can come to some judgment about it."

The admiral gave Grace Dolan's letter to read, which she did with the most marked attention; and the changes of her expressive features as she did so, sufficiently testified the indignation with which she regarded the aspersions that were cast by that letter upon Martin, and Joseph, and Gerald. When she had concluded the reading, she said:

"I must think of all this. Oh father! Gerald must and shall be saved to-morrow. I must think what can be done, dear father; for you do not know how good and kind he has been for years past to me."

"Everything shall be done, my dear love, that you can suggest. Your father will go heart and hand with you."

Grace looked very thoughtful, as she again glanced at Dolan's infamous letter to the admiral. Then she whispered to herself:

"Yes, for Gerald—for Gerald. Anything for Gerald!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

DOLAN MAKES HIS LAST PREPARATIONS FOR ESCAPE.

THERE is intense excitement in the sea-cavern of the cliff; for the smuggler crew are now well aware that something is seriously amiss, and that their safety is in some way jeopardized, if not actually compromised.

The absence of Martin, the absence of Joseph, and the mysterious death of the night-watch on the deck of the cutter, had all become known to them; and by the time Dolan found his way back to the cavern through the cool, heaving waters of the little bay, there was all that kind of commotion in the community of the hidden caverns that betokens uneasy expectations.

His loud whistle from the deck of the Rift was a welcome sound to all.

From numerous recesses of the cavern; from beneath tarpaulins and boat-cloaks—some of them of the most costly description, which had formed part of the plunder which now and then had come to hand in the cruises of the Rift—came the crew who had for so long made up the nefarious ship's company of Dolan.

The light from several torches, stuck into clefts in the cliff, shed a lurid kind of luster over the dark, heaving water, and on the hull, cordage, and brails of the cutter.

That light, too, shone upon the fierce and war-thorn, as well as crime-worn, countenances of the pirate-crew, and upon Dolan, all dripping with salt-water, as he was standing upon the deck of the cutter.

In silence they gathered about him.

It must not now be forgotten what was the exact state Dolan was in as regarded his intelligence of what had occurred in relation to Captain Mocquet, Gerald, Grace, Martin, and Joseph.

The whole of those persons, so far as he knew, were in the caverns, and subjected to his mercy.

The ruffian had to receive the blow which a knowledge of their escape would give to him.

There was, therefore—with a conviction of power to be brutal and murderous if he liked—upon his countenance a gleam of triumphant ferocity that was terrible to look upon.

"My gallant crew," he said: "my noble fellows, who have with me braved for so long the breezes and storms of old ocean, and who have defied men and laws—the time has come when, along with the reward of your past exertions, you will get news of who is your friend and who your foe, and be able, no doubt, to do justice to both."

"Give us our money!" cried a voice.

"Who is that?"

"Me—Jem Ratlings. Give us our money!"

"Share! share!" shouted several others. "Give us our share, and let us all separate which way we please!"

"Come, old Dolan," said one. "Let's have no fine speeches: it's the rhino we want!"

Dolan's eyes gleamed savagely.

"Mates," he added, "if you like now, this moment, to have the chests opened, and their rich contents divided among you—"

"Yes, yes—open them! Hurrah! All's right! That will do! Yes, yes! Hoorah!"

"You may!" added Dolan, with a yelling voice, that startled them all; "but—but—"

"What now?" growled one.

"But what?" cried several.

"You will, within the next twelve hours, all fall into the clutches of the law!"

There was a hushed look about them all, and they advanced a step nearer to Captain Dolan.

"One and all!" he added; "I have been some hours from you; and during those hours I have

learned all we want to know to put us on our guard."

"What is it?—what is it?"

"Will you have your money, all of you, and take your chances now at once? I don't want to hinder you; and I don't want to tell you what will save your lives and fortunes, all of you, if you don't want to listen."

"We do!—we do! Tell us all you have to say. We will hear all."

"Not only," continued Dolan, with a violent wave of his arm, "not only did I wish every man here to get his full share of the plunder we have in these caverns, but I wanted him to go off with it, and enjoy it, and for that purpose it was that I went on a voyage of discovery on shore, and right away to the town. It has cost me more gold than I choose to mention to find out what I have found out; and that is, that to-morrow morning there will be an attack on these caverns!"

"An attack!"

"Yes, an attack, both by sea and land."

"Are they found out, then?"

"They are!"

The commotion among the crew now was very great; and there was, at first, a disposition to leave the Rift, and for each one to look after his own safety and means of escape; but Dolan succeeded in stopping them, by calling out, in a loud voice:

"Hear me! I have more to tell you."

"Ay, ay!—hear the captain!"

"After finding out—it don't matter how—but after finding that we were in this danger, my next object was, to discover the how and wherefore—the reason why (for people don't know everything unless they are told; and particularly I was sure they would know nothing of this cavern unless they were told of it by some one familiar with it)."

"Ay, ay! That's certain and ship-shape."

"Gerald—my own son Gerald!"

There was a laugh at the sentimental way in which Dolan strove to say this; but he continued:

"Yes, my own son—for, notwithstanding all any of you may have heard to the contrary, he is my own son—has betrayed us; I am certain of that."

"Kill him!—drown him!—death to him!"

"Say, say!—no, not yet. I have one favor to ask of you for all that I am now doing for you—one favor; it is, that you shall spare that boy."

There was a groan of discontent.

"Hear me out! You will approve of what I have to say if you will only hear me out, my brave companions. Hear all, and then decide for yourselves, mates."

"Hear him! hear him! Ay, ay—go on."

"What I propose, then, is, that you get the start of your enemies. The large chests that contain your treasure can be easily put on board the Rift; and just at the ebb of the tide to-night (which is about two o'clock), open the covering of the cavern, and sail out into the bay. The attack on this place will not be till the morning's light; and by that time you may be right away on the Sussex coast. I advise that you beat up northward, then, to some obscure place in Scotland, and there land and divide your booty. There is Edinburgh, by the Firth of Forth; you will run up to it in the cutter within a week. I will meet you there, and we shall be quite safe in a place like that; and from it you can all go whatever way your fancy leads you."

There was a shout of approval at this proposition and then one voice said:

"Why don't you come with us, captain?"

"Because I have some business here. I will come and join you overland; but I will do better than come with you, for I will send the treasure-chests with you."

"Ay, ay!—that will do."

"I have many little affairs to settle in regard to some of the cottages which I wanted to sell; and then there is my little daughter Grace I want to see placed somewhere where she will be taken care of."

Dolan again tried to look sentimental, and again some of the crew laughed; and when they did so, he bit his lip, and thought to himself:

"Wait a bit!—oh, only wait a bit!"

"And the boy?" cried one.

"Take him with you; I advise, by all means, that you take him with you. That is what I want to ask you to do. Take him. Don't have his death at any of your doors; for he is but a boy. Take him to-night with you in the Rift; and when you get in the North Sea, send him adrift in one of the small boats, and do anything you like with him; but take him with you to-night."

"Very good!—very well!" said one; "but there's a little objection."

"Objection?"

"Yes, captain; he's not to be found."

Dolan staggered

"Not to be found?"

"No; he's off, and Miss Grace, too. When we found you were away, and when some of the fellows said you were not coming back, we had a good hunt through the old caves."

"Ah!"

"And found them gone."

A livid hue spread itself over the face of Dolan; and he rushed the flat of his right hand against the palm of his left, as he cried:

"There's Martin's doing!"

"Not a doubt about that, I should say," growled Bowline, "and what else could that be?"

"Who put a cork in that chest?"

"That's your own fault."

"Gerald caught Martin's hand!"

"Ay, Joseph, but that there's no looking back on the old pattern."

Dolan was forced to hold the Rift together for a port, and a feeling of faintness came over him. Had his victims, after all, eluded him? Was it possible that they had escaped, or were they still hiding somewhere in the caverns, or were they still in the caverns of the cliff? Was all he had schemed and striven for, after all, to pass away like a dream, and were his victims to elude his vengeance?

"No, no!" he gasped; "it cannot be! They are here; they are all here still. Who was on watch?—who was it? They could not have left unobserved. Who was on watch by the ravine?—who? who?"

"I was," said the man.

"And who more?"

"Beard—Tom Beard. He isn't the likely man to let any one pass his watch without a brace of bullets; nor me, either. Nobody came my way."

"And who was here—here, on the cutter's deck?"

"Benjamin."

"Ah! yes! Oh fools! To forget that—God! I saw him! They killed him! I remember all now! I saw the body! I turned it over, and saw the ghastly, drowned face! Why, it is real—it is all real! The danger is all real! Help! We are all lost! lost!"

"Why, what's in the wind now?" said Bowline, savagely, advancing upon Dolan.

The crew, too, took up the cry, and looked threateningly at him.

Then Dolan, with a face as pale as death itself, said, quite gently:

"What's the matter?"

"You ought to know that," said Bowline. "What did you mean by saying all was lost, eh?"

"Did I say so?"

"You know you did, and that the danger was real."

"Well, it is; and all will be lost if you do not do as I say to you; all will be lost; but if you do that all will be saved. I wish now, some of you to go down to the cabin and fetch up Captain Moequet, the French captain. You know I destroyed his note of hand for the ransom; and so I think you ought to have another from him, and take care of it yourselves, my brave mates. When I meet you in Scotland, we can, I dare say, think of some way of getting the money for it."

"Oh, he's gone, too," said Bowline.

"Gone!"

"Ay, Captain Dolan; you may reckon them all up now—Grace, Gerald, Martin, Joseph, and Captain Moequet."

Dolan licked his lips, and shuddered.

"Who went into the cabin?"

"I did."

"And—and you saw nothing—nothing?"

"Nothing."

Dolan made two steps toward the hatchway, and then he shrank back; then he made another step, and, turning toward Bowline, he said:

"You saw nothing?—you heard nothing?"

"Not I. I suppose you are thinking of the ghost of the Frenchman's daughter you spoke of seeing when you were half out of your mind; but I didn't see her."

"Well, well, in a moment; I will come back in a moment, my men—only I have some papers down below which I should not quite like to go away without. That is all; that is all. I shall only be a moment; and Bowline! Bowline!"

"Well, what now?"

"Did you see if the cabin lamp was alight when you were there?"

"It was."

"Very well—very good!"

Dolan slowly went down the hatch.

Nothing but his cupidity could possibly have contended against his superstitious fears, and induced him to go down into that cabin, in the little berth leading from which he had been so terrified by the sight of the French captain's daughter, whom he believed he had, without the possibility of doubt, consigned to a watery grave.

But in a drawer of one of the lockers—a secret drawer that he had with great pains constructed himself—Captain Dolan had secreted a small canvas bag, in which were some ten or a dozen unset precious stones, which from time to time he had purchased at a cost of about a hundred pounds each, and there placed, as the most portable form in which he could have that amount in money, and which he knew would be easily convertible into cash in any large city.

It was, then, to get possession of this precious deposit, that Dolan made his way to the main cabin of the Rift.

It was a great relief to Dolan to find the little sliding-door of the berth closed.

The locker was on the other side of the cabin table, and close to the sliding-door of the berth.

It took him about a minute to get at the secret drawer; and then he clutched the bag of jewels.

His courage was waning a little; and he left the door open, as he hastily moved away from the little sliding-panel that led to the supposed haunted berth.

As if the fiend himself had been at his heels then, Dolan rushed to the deck of the Rift; and the look of relief upon his face when he reached it was great.

Then Bowline stepped forward; and, amid the silence of the crew, he said:

"Captain Dolan, we don't want to spoil good-fellowship, or to cast any doubts upon you; but we have come to the conclusion that we should like to see into one of those same chests of treasure which you have had in your keeping so long."

"Nothing more natural," said Dolan.

"You have no objection?"

"Quite the contrary."

"Then come on, captain, at once."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TREASURE-CHEST—MIDNIGHT AT THE CAVERN.

The crew of the Rift pressed around Dolan as though they half expected that, by some means or another, he would yet escape them; and the coolness and easiness with which he had acceded to the request had not fully reassured them on a point which had been for a long time a subject of uneasy speculation to many of them.

"Come," said Dolan, "since you must see those treasure-chests, so be it. You will find I have done well for you."

"Ay, ay! The treasures! Let's see them, captain," was the cry, as Dolan slipped into one of the boats alongside the Rift, and was rowed to those steps that led through the chalk to the upper cavern.

The lamp still burnt there, shedding its mysterious light about the large, irregular place, and then Dolan went to a recess which was closed by a massive door of which he had the key, and, putting it into the lock, he held his hand upon it as he turned to the crew and spoke with ease and assurance:

"I had these chests made," he said, "in a particular fashion. I thought that when the time came for a division of our spoil, it would be better to have most of it in gold and silver, even although it might be weighty to carry."

"Nobody objects to the weight of gold and silver, I take it, mates," said Bowline.

"Not a bit," was the general cry.

"So I thought," added Dolan, "and therefore I converted what goods we got together into money, rather than notes, which might be burnt or stolen, or exposed to many accidents, besides there was a sort of security in the very weight of these chests."

"Ay, ay!"

"Try one. This one, now."

A couple of the men with great difficulty raised the end of one of the chests.

"My eyes and limbs," said one, "and is that all money?"

"It is—and your money, too, my bold companions and shipmates. Your money!"

"We would just like to see it," said Bowline.

"Shot weighs heavy, and so does old ballast."

There was a shout among the crew at these suggestions, and more than one knife gleamed in the dim light.

"Let me understand you," said Dolan. "Does Bowline mean to say that the weight of these chests is owing to shot and old ballast being in them? Because, if he does, let him step forward and say so like a man."

"I didn't say so."

"Then what did you say?"

"Come, come, Captain Dolan. The day is going fast, and if we are to get away from here at the ebb, we shall have enough to do. If you can show us the money, I will own that I am quite wrong. If you can't—"

The knives gleamed again.

"Why, you will kindly murder me," said Dolan. "Very good; I have had some trouble in being your treasurer, and this is my reward. Very good. Well, shipmates, you will have a job to move these chests on board the Rift, but if you put slings on them, you will manage it well enough."

"The money! The money!"

"How impatient you all are! There!"

Dolan knelt down by one of the chests, and produced a key, which he fitted into the lock.

The lock opened with a snap.

There was an eager projection of heads to look into the chest, and Dolan opened the lid a little way, crying out as he did so:

"Now, mates, honor among smugglers!"

The rays from the lamp that hung in the center of the cavern glittered upon a confused surface of silver coins of all denominations lying one upon the other.

"Oh! that is the silver one," said Dolan.

"My eye!" said one of the men.

"It's all right!" said another.

"Is it all the way down?" said a third.

"That makes it so heavy," replied Dolan, "but we will turn it all out if you like, and see?"

"No—no. Oh! no!"

"Is Mr. Bowline satisfied?"

"It is there," muttered Bowline.

Bang went the lid of the chest, down, and Dolan locked it on the moment.

"We have little time to lose," he said, "but I will look for the keys of the others, and you can have them all open before you take them on board the Rift."

"No—no. We are satisfied! That will do! We are content. Three cheers for Captain Dolan!"

"My good fellows," said Dolan, "there is a shore-going saying which says: 'Don't halloo till you get out of the wood,' and I think we may apply it here. No cheers till you get clear off with your booty. If I might advise you, I should say, get these treasure-chests at once on board the Rift, and then you can place your own guard over them, and I shall feel relieved of a great responsibility."

"Ay, ay! That will do."

The crew set to work, and these chests were then taken out of the recess in the cliffs, and with a great deal of labor, were fairly brought alongside the Rift, and slung onto her deck and placed midships as nearly as possible.

It was perfectly astonishing how amiable Dolan looked, and it was only when he was quite alone in one of the recesses of the cavern that his whole frame was shaken by a suppressed laugh, and he said to himself:

"Twenty pounds' worth of silver makes a great show on the top of a chest-full of old chain-cable. Ha, ha!"

Every preparation was now made by the smuggler crew to sail out with the Rift on the first turn of the ebb-tide. There was a thorough searching and ransacking of the caverns, so that nothing of readily convertible value should be left behind, and that search convinced even Dolan that Grace and Gerald had really, for the time, escaped him.

Then Dolan made an affection of speaking about the night-watches, and the guards of the opening to the ravine, and on the plateau where a man had been stationed in the lieu of Joseph, whose constant post it had been.

"All well," was the reply, and then one of the men added:

"Nobody has come into the cave but Mrs. Wagner, since the sun set."

"Mrs. Wagner!" exclaimed Dolan.

"Yes, captain, but that's all right."

"Oh! yes, Mrs. Wagner. Ha! A boat here!"

Dolan was on the deck of the Rift, and he at once stepped into a boat, and went toward the steps leading to the inner cavern. These steps, and the passages beyond it, and the inner cavern, were now quite deserted, for the whole of the crew were in and about the cutter. One solitary link was burning at the end of the passage leading to the steps, and Dolan paused at that, and listened.

"I do not hear her," he said. "I did not see her come in, but the guard would, of course, let her pass, and she could easily make her way along the dark shadows, and I not see her, as I was not looking for her. Well, she has come to meet her doom. I fancy, and it is as well here as elsewhere. Better perhaps—much better. Maria! Maria, I say! are you here?"

There was a suppressed scream, and then all was still.

"What on earth does she mean?" cried Dolan, as he snatched the torch from its niche in the chalk, and ran toward the great cavern in which there was no lamp lighted now.

Dolan held the light high above his head. For a few moments a confused mass of shadows alone met his view, and then they seemed to arrange

themselves into a human form, and crouching down, and trying to hide something, by holding her hands over it, he saw Mrs. Wagner.

There was a small black box, the lid of it was open, and the contents strewn about upon the floor of the cavern. It would appear as if in the fright at hearing the voice of Dolan calling upon her, Mrs. Wagner had dropped this small, black box, which she had been carrying, although it was rather large so to do; and then, when it fell, no doubt the lid had burst open, and the contents had fallen out onto the floor.

There were several toys, such as a little child of about two years old might have possessed. There were several articles of children's wearing apparel, and a little white beaver hat, with pale-blue ostrich feathers. In fact, there appeared to be pretty well the whole paraphernalia of a child's out-of-door costume.

And all these things lay about, and Mrs. Wagner, with cries and screams, was making futile attempts to gather them together, and hide them from the eyes of Dolan.

But most futile, indeed, were those attempts, inasmuch as he could not fail to see every one of the articles that fell from the small box, and as he there stood, with the link in his hand, he glared at the wretched woman, his face grew livid with rage, and a baleful fire shot from his eyes.

She looked up at him in terror. She had never seen him look like that—at least not to her, and she felt all her danger.

"Mercy! Have mercy upon me, Dolan. It was for your good—all for your good."

His rage was so great, that for the moment it only vented itself in a hissing noise. Then she still on her knees implored again his mercy.

"No—no!" she said, "you must not think that it was to betray your secret—your long kept secret, that I was taking this box—to—to—to—"

"To whom?" bellowed Dolan, with a roar of rage that echoed through the cavern like the meaningless howl of some wild animal. To whom? To whom?

"The admiral."

"To Clifford?"

"Yes—yes. To save you. To make terms for you. That was it—only for you—only and wholly for you."

It was with a positive yell of fury then that Dolan sprung forward, and with a plunge of his foot, rather than a kick, scattered the contents of the black box over the cavern.

"Wretch and spy!" he cried, "I know you—I know you now. You would purchase your own safety by betraying me. I know you now!"

"No—no! Oh! no."

"Yes, I say. Yes, a thousand times."

"Dolan—in mercy! Oh! I will tell all! No, no, do not kill me—oh! do not. I did not mean! I will tell you all, Dolan; if ever you felt for me a moment's affection, spare me now."

Dolan sprung upon her with a yell of hate and rage. He struck her on the head with the link. A thousand bright sparks flew from it, and it was extinguished. She grasped his arm—she clung to him, and screamed aloud. Then there was one half-stifled cry and all was still, save the heavy breathing of Dolan in his rage.

The link lay smoldering on the floor of the cavern. It was just within his reach. By a stretch he got hold of it, and whirled it round and round. The red embers at its head glowed again, and then a little flickering flame burst forth, which he humored by turning the link about, and holding it downward.

The little flame grew longer, and the link was in a blaze. Then Dolan tried to turn his eyes upon the object at his feet, but he dared not. Some terrible convulsion kept him from doing so, and yet chained him to the spot.

"Dead!—she is dead! It is but another; and I have looked upon death so often, why should I fear it in her—I who have killed others? She is not the first—not the first!"

"Hoy!" shouted a voice. "Dolan! Captain Dolan! Hoy! Where are you?"

"That is Bowline. I know that voice. He must not see this sight. He and they must not suspect it. Hillo! hillo!"

"Hoy!"

"Hold! Not another step. What would you? What is it? Th—time has not yet come. Hold! What would you?"

Captain Dolan strode forward, and held the link so that the shadow of himself fell upon the dead body on the floor, and faced Bowline.

"Oh, there you are, captain!"

"Well, well. What is it?"

"Why, here's Miss Grace has come into the sea-cave by the entrance in the ravine."

"Grace?—Grace?" yelled Dolan.

"Yes; and it appears that the Philistines have got hold of Gerald, and she wants the men to sign a kind of paper that he was forced on board the Rift, and that he was dragged upon the deck, and that he did not fire at the king's ship."

"Grace—Grace—she here?"

"She is. You may hear her now. Hark! that is her voice. She prays and calls upon the men to save Gerald. They mock her! Do you not hear?"

"Perdition! Ah!"

Her fair hair streaming in disorder around her—her dress torn by the briars and wild vegetation of the path in the ravine—Grace Morton, as we may now properly call her, had entered the cavern to procure evidence from the crew of the Rift that would release Gerald, and now knelt down close to the feet of Dolan.

"Hear me," she said. "Dolan, you hear me. I have come to tell you of your doings, and to ask you to do one act of justice for your soul's sake. I ask you to save Gerald by declaring his innocence. Write it—write it here. It is written. You will put your name to this paper. You will admit that Thomas Wright turned false witness. You will do it? You will save him?"

"Stop! Answer me—answer what I shall ask of you!"

"Yes, Dolan."

"Gerald—where is he?"

"In prison."

"Accused—accused? By a letter—by Thomas Wright—of piracy—of inciting us on—of being the worst of all?"

"Yes! Oh, yes!"

"And he is in prison—in a fair way of condemnation?"

"Alas, yes! Oh, Dolan! you see me here—here at your feet. I love Gerald—with all my heart, I do love him! I love Heaven, and I love Gerald. Dolan, do this act—save him! Let me carry to the admiral your evidence for him. It is down here on this paper—in a few words. Dolan, you will do it?"

"Not if a thousand devils—well, that don't matter. No—no—no!"

He yelled out the negatives with awful vehemence, and Grace recoiled from his awful gaze.

"No! I have you both now, and my heart's desire is satisfied. Gerald a felon! you—you—ha! ha!—and you were safe—you had then escaped me, and you have come back into the toils again! You—fool that you are—you are mine, now, not as a daughter—ha!—not as a daughter; no, no!"

Bloom! came the sound of a gun at sea.

Dolan started.

"What is that?"

"Boom!" from shoreward came another gun, and this latter one sounded as from the top of the cliffs.

"Betrayed! We are betrayed!" shouted Dolan.

"Betrayed by this girl. It is she who has told the secret of our cavern in the cliff—she and Gerald. Revenge!"

"No!" cried Bowline. "By the heavens above us, Dolan, you shall not harm the girl!"

"Ah! you oppose me, villain—wretch! I have set my life upon all this! I will kill her—her—you—all! Devils that you are, I am mad—mad—mad!"

A wild cry arose from the sea-cave at this moment, as a round shot came with a crash through the sail-cloth that closed the entrance to the cavern, and tore its way over the deck of the Rift, from stern to stern, killing three men in its progress.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PROJECTED ATTACK UPON THE CLIFF-CAVERN.

It was about an hour after sunset, on that most eventful evening, some of the incidents of which—in connection with Dolan and his secret home in the cliff—we have already related, that an unusual bustle was evident at the bit of coast not far from Admiral Sir Thomas Clifford's residence.

In the fluttering wind—that wind which was so rapidly rising, and which was soon to blow into the cavern with all its fury—there stood by the landing-place, where Captain Morton of the Nautilus had first seen the admiral, several persons.

There was the admiral himself—several naval officers; and there was Captain Morton. A small throng of idlers were close at hand, looking on with apparent wonder at some proceedings they could not comprehend.

The boat of the Nautilus was waiting for Captain Morton at the foot of the steps; and some miles out at sea there burned a blue-light on board some vessel, which was evidently beating on and off in the roads.

At the top of the admiral's house there was one of the old semaphore signal-posts; but it had an ingenious contrivance attached to it, by which lights were arranged so as to throw a reflection upon those eccentric-looking arms, which, by their different angularities, denoted the orders of those who set them in motion.

It was a short time after this apparatus had been at work that the blue light had been observed on the vessel in the roads.

That vessel was the Spray.

And now, with a bright flush upon his face and a sparkle about the eyes—such as he had not known for many a long day—Captain Morton descended one of the steps leading toward his boat; and, holding out his hand to Admiral Clifford, he said:

"My dear friend, we shall soon meet again. I see the boat of your schooner is near at hand now, and you may depend that the Nautilus will not be many feet behind the Spray in the attack upon the pirates' nest."

The admiral pressed the hand of Captain Morton as he replied:

"Thanks, Morton, thanks! Here is my boat."

A boat, which had been signaled for from the Spray schooner, now dashed up to the steps, and both the admiral and the captain descended them together. The Nautilus lay at about a mile out, and the Spray about double that distance now, but that space was rapidly decreasing as with a long tack she was beating in to meet her boat.

Then the admiral turned to one of the officers that were with him and said:

"Are you sure, Mr Strongways, that Mr. Anderson has taken possession of the ravine?"

"He will be in possession, admiral, within half an hour of this time."

"That will do."

The two boats pushed off together, and were soon pulling toward their respective vessels.

Captain Morton waved his hand to the admiral as the American boat shot off at an angle toward the Nautilus, and then the blue-light gradually began to die away on board the Spray, but still it shone sufficiently to indicate her place in the offing.

And now the blue-light died out on the deck of the Spray, and the admiral's boat was nearly alongside of the schooner.

"Boat, ahoy!" was the cry from the deck-watch.

"Flag!" was the response, and then a couple of lanterns at the gangway showed Lieutenant Green in uniform, with his drawn sword in his hand, with which he ceremoniously saluted Admiral Clifford, who returned the courtesy, and then shook hands with Mr. Green, who said:

"You command here, admiral. Where shall we go?"

"No, I will not command; but keep on and off at the entrance of the bay in which the smuggler vessel was supposed, by Captain Grey, to sink."

"Yes, admiral."

Lieutenant Green gave the necessary orders, and then he and the admiral, and the officers who had come with the latter, descended to the little main cabin of the Spray, where, to the surprise of Mr. Green, the secret of the cavern in the cliff was fully explained.

"That's it! Yes, that must be it!" he exclaimed; "and it is so easy, too—so very easy."

"There was its success."

"So simple. Why, we must have had no eyes not to see it!"

"It was never suspected, and so never looked for," added the admiral. "Its very simplicity has been its safeguard from the first to the last; but that the Rift is lying there now at anchor, I have not the remotest doubt."

"Then we have this villain, admiral, in his own trap."

"We have indeed; and thank God that there are only those three, who may well suffer with him. Captain Morton's daughter has been rescued from him; but that is a long story, which you shall hear the full particulars of at my house to-morrow. Lieutenant Anderson, with a strong party of his men, has by this time possession of the only other outlet from the caverns, except by the sea—that outlet is in a narrow ravine that leads from the top of the cliffs to the beach. I think, therefore, Mr. Green, that when they find their nest discovered they will be only too glad to surrender."

"Let them fight, admiral, if they like. We have the rascals surely now."

The heaving of the Spray on the agitated sea each moment became greater, and when the admiral and Mr. Green came upon deck, the wind had very much increased.

The little yacht Nautilus shot ahead of the Spray at this moment, and made its way close to one of the promontories, which, being on the weather-bow, shielded her from the full force of the wind, and she rode easily and safely.

Then the Spray dashed into the bay, where there was a tumbling sea, while the wind was really not so powerful there, from the reaction against the cliffs and the protection of the promontories.

A rocket then, landward, sprung into the night air, and Lieutenant Strongways, who had been on the watch for it, approached the admiral and said:

"Lieutenant Anderson, sir, has taken possession of the ravine."

"That will do. Now, Mr. Green, I don't think we need wait, except for the signal."

"A signal, admiral?"

"Ah, yes! I forgot. My man will hoist a lantern on the old signal-post by the edge of the cliff, and below that in a right line will be the mouth of the cavern."

"There, sir! Is that it?"

"Yes; that will do. One white light."

As if ascending in the night-air to a height of about twenty feet, by its own mere volition, a white light rose from the very verge of the cliff.

The darkness was by far too great for the old signal-post to be seen, or for the sailor-servant of the admiral to be visible; but the light shone out like a star, which, at some distance at sea, it more resembled than anything else.

"Now, sir," said the admiral, "fire one gun, as a signal to Lieutenant Anderson that the attack is about to commence."

"Yes, sir."

A few moments, and the boom of that first gun, which had so shocked Dolan in the inner cavern, awakened the echoes of the bay.

With a sharper report, an answering gun came from shore.

"The lieutenant has the small twelve-pounder from his batter," said the admiral. "I want to catch these fellows without the loss of honest men's lives, if I can; and I told him to make a display of force. Now, sir, go in."

The crew of the schooner were placed at quarters, and the guns shouted. Surprise and expectation were upon every face; for no enemy could they see, and the Spray seemed to be only intent on her own destruction by sailing into a bay, around the whole shoreward segment of which there seemed to be nothing but cliffs.

"Soundings, there!" shouted the lieutenant.

"Quarter less three, sir!"

"That will do. Brail up, Mr. Royle. Down anchor and let her swing!"

"Ay, ay, sir. And in time, too," muttered Mr. Royle. "Why, we were going stern on to this big cliff, with the light on the top of it!"

"You see it?" whispered the admiral.

"Something, sir."

"I fancy there is a difference. Look, Mr. Green."

The admiral had been looking through a night glass, which he now handed to the lieutenant, who looked long and curiously at the portion of cliff below the light. Then he said:

"It is well done, admiral. I can see nothing but chalk."

"It is well done. One shot will settle the question, Mr. Green. Fire at the chalk, as it seems to be about a line or two above the water's surface."

The Spray had some eighteen-pound guns, and one twenty-four. It was the twenty-four now that Lieutenant Green had pointed to the cliff.

With a stunning report, the gun was fired, and awakened all the echoes of the bay. The ball tore through the the canvas covering of the sea-cave, and there was a crashing sound then, and loud screams of rage and pain. A dull glare of light came through the opening in the thick double-sail-cloth and then the crew of the Spray seemed in a moment to comprehend the whole affair; and they raised a cheer which mingled with the echoes of the gun.

That cheer was answered by another; and then standing close in by the bows of the Spray, could be seen the Nautilus, with Captain Morton on her deck, and the flush of excitement on his brow.

"Eurrah! Well done!" he shouted.

Lieutenant Green waved his hand to Captain Morton to keep out of the line of fire; for he fully expected a return of his shot, from the cavern.

Once more we shift the scene, and take the reader to the prison, in which Martin, Joseph, and Gerald were confined until the morrow.

The prison was one only used for persons who were committed for re-examination; and the principles on which it was conducted were anything but strict. It was a small, dilapidated building, on the outskirts of the town, and was very inefficiently taken charge of. It was toward the dusk of the evening that a loud knocking at the door of his jail aroused its keeper from a nap he was enjoying, after a glass of something and water—the something never having paid its duty to the excise, notwithstanding the majority of persons consigned to that little miserable prison were sent there for smuggling or complicity in smuggling.

"What now?" was the gruff and surly demand of the prison-keeper at the little wicket.

"You shall order me in," said a voice, which the man at once decided, in his own mind, belonged to a citizen of the *grande nation*, so thoroughly French was it in tone and manner.

"Order you in? What do you mean? I don't want to order you in."

"One prisoner to see one order. Take him!"

"Lord bless me! what idiots these here foreigners are, to go on speaking in the way they do, when plain English is so very easy. What's that? Oh! let's see: a order to admit—to admit—Monseer—no, Mounseer—Mounseer Mocquet to see Gerald—Gerald Nobody. Oh! I recollect now. It's the pirate-lad, that's going to be hanged. Well, mounseer, I see Mr. Tickley has signed the order."

"Oui!"

"There, now; he says 'we.' Why can't he say yes, like a Christian. Oh! come in, do."

With a look of disgust on his face at the obstinacy of people who will not speak "plain English," the jailer opened the gate, and our old friend, Captain Mocquet, walked into the prison with his usual courteous bow.

The man led the way into a room where Gerald was lying on a board laid over two trestles. He instantly sprung up, and was in a moment in the arms of Monsieur Mocquet.

"*Monsieur* Gerald, you shall listen. As one proverb Anglaise shall say, a bad wind blow everybody to good. Bah! Marie did go—for invitation—at Grace. *Mais*, she leave one letter—Mademoiselle Grace was leave one letter. He was open—*mais*, *que voulez vous?* Bah!"

"What do you mean, Captain Mocquet? For Heaven's sake, tell me—what of Grace?"

"Marie was go the admiral now to see Grace, and all was confuse. She bring away to me one billet. He is here—I bring him to you. Bah!"

Captain Mocquet upon this produced a small, open note; and by the light of a miserable candle that the jailer had left with them, he read the following words:

"If I do not return soon, seek for me at the cavern in the cliff. My errand there is to try to save Gerald, who is innocent."

"The cavern!" cried Gerald. "Grace back to the cavern—my Grace? Oh, God! he will kill—madness, madness! Oh, my Grace—my poor Grace; she is lost—lost! And I here—I am not able to fly to her rescue! Open—open! Let me out—I will come back again—let me out! As there is a God in Heaven I will come back again!"

Gerald hammered with his fists against the door of the room and the jailer roughly opened it and put in his head.

"What's the row, now? Can't you and the Frenchman agree for five minutes?"

"Let me out! I pray you to let me out—I will come back again. Indeed I will."

"That's cool," said the man, as he slammed the door shut.

"Stop! Hold! I—What you say, Monsieur Gerald? Ah! I have him!"

"What—what?"

"I shall take off my clothes, and you shall put on your clothes; and my clothes shall be my clothes; and your clothes shall be somebody else, and I shall go out as myself, and you shall stay away as yourself and make one escape. Ah!"

Through all this confusion, Gerald guessed that Monsieur Mocquet proposed a change of clothing; and that he, Gerald, should make his escape in his, the French captain's apparel. Gerald caught at the idea with delight.

"Yes—yes," he said; "we are both of a light. You are very good, Monsieur Mocquet. I thank you with all my heart. It will surely succeed—only I am so much darker than you are. That is a pity."

"*Voilà!*" said Monsieur Mocquet, as he at once lifted from his head a wig that he wore, and which Gerald had never looked at him sufficiently to detect.

"Capital!" said Gerald; "that will do."

The exchange of clothes with Captain Mocquet was very quickly effected, and the wig transferred to the head of Gerald, together with the rather eccentric cap that the French captain wore over it.

Then Gerald shook hands with Mocquet and thanked him twenty times and knocked loudly on the panel of the door.

"Speak," he said, "Captain Mocquet—when the man comes, speak, and say you wish to go."

Gerald blew out the light just as the jailer opened the door of the room.

"Well, what now?"

"I shall walk myself out," said Mocquet.

"Ah, rubbish! Walk himself out, indeed! Come along, you idiot! Come on—come on, do. There, be off!"

The outer gate was opened, and the jailer pushed Gerald very unceremoniously out into the street. In another moment, some one clasped him in their arms, and the voice of Marie sounded in his ears, saying something in French, in which he heard his own name. There was a little miserable street-lamp close at hand, and Gerald turned his face toward it; and then Marie knew him. She had mistaken him for her father for whom she had been waiting.

"Gerald! Gerald!"

Gerald pointed to his clothes and the wig, and then to the prison. Marie understood him in a moment.

"Bon! bon!"

She slid her arm in that of Gerald, and looked compassionately and gently up into his face. Then before they could either of them say another word, or move from the spot, a heavy hand was laid upon the shoulder of Gerald, and a voice said:

"What cheer, young sir? How's this? Ain't you in limbo? Why, Miss Clifford sent me here to this stone-jug, with something of all sorts in the eating and drinking line, for you and your messmates, and here I find you outside with this little pinnace alo' gside of you."

"Ah! I recollect you," said Gerald, "I saw you at the admiral's. You are in his service?"

"Rayther."

"And your name?"

"Call me Jack. It's a good purser's name, that."

"Then, Jack, I am sure you will not betray me."

The French captain, Mocquet, has changed clothes

with me, so that I have escaped from prison, and as I hear that Miss Grace Morton has gone back to the caverns in the cliff, which I suppose you know of by this time, I want to go and perish there, with her, or save her."

"That's right! And the little pinnace here?"

"This is Captain Mocquet's daughter, Marie. She was waiting here, for her father."

"Your sarvent, miss. Hark you, youngster, I don't like a many folks, but I do like you. Lord bless you, I took to you so soon as I saw you make sail into the hall, and your figure-head warms my heart to see it. Let's take this little pinnace to the admiral's house. Miss Clifford will see to her, and then I'm with you. I'm under orders to hoist a signal-light on the top of the old cliff, but when that's done on the flag-staff, then I'm with you. Come on, my hearty. We will show them yet what a man-o'-war's-man can do."

Marie looked at Jack and at Gerald, quite innocent of all that was said, but as Gerald gently led her along, she followed his impulse, and they all reached the admiral's house. Then Gerald pointed to the house and to Jack, and placed Marie's hand in Jack's, so that she understood she was to go there.

And Marie shook Gerald by both hands, and then pressed one of them for a moment to her heart, and went into the admiral's house with Jack, who soon returned, with a lantern and some cordage in his hands.

"Now for it—you come along, Mr. Gerald, and as we go, I'll tell you all the plan of the affair. Lord love you, the pirates are going to be cut out to-night. It will be a blue-jacket affair altogether. Come on."

Jack lit the signal-lantern, and then he and Gerald went down to the beach, where the cottages were. They had had a very long "confabulation," as Jack termed it, and had resolved upon a course of action, which, in its results, brought them both in very critical circumstances into the thickest of the affray in the pirate's cavern.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCLUSION.

Our readers will now clearly understand the state of affairs in and about that long secretly maintained sea-cavern of Dolan and his pirate crew.

By a combination of circumstances which he had battled against in every possible way, but over which he had at last evidently had no control, Dolan found himself at bay, and in that very cavern of the cliff from which he had so fully expected to escape, leaving the crew of the *Rift* to encounter all the dangers of discovery.

When the first round shot from the *Spray* dashed into the sea-cave, the smugglers felt that their secret was known, and that it would be a fight for life or for death with them now.

Another round of shot came from the *Spray*, dashing into the opening, and tearing along the deck of the *Rift*.

Shrieks and groans testified to its destructive powers, and then Bowline cried out:

"Down with the sails. Down with the covering of the cavern! They know it now, and it is only in our way!"

He made a rush himself, and the pulleys and cords creaked and the sails that blocked the crevice in the cliff were moved aside just as another bright flash, and then a roaring sound proclaimed another gun from the *Spray*.

"Down all!"

The crew of the *Rift* flung themselves prostrate, and the missile flew harmlessly over them, striking the chalk at the further end of the cavern, from whence it fell into the water.

"Now give it them!" cried Bowline. "One shot for the honor of the *Rift*."

By dint of great personal exertion, he and some of the crew slew round some of the guns of the *Rift*, and brought them to bear upon the bay. The *Spray* was pretty distinctly seen by the flash of her guns.

"Fire!" cried Bowline, and as he spoke, the *Rift's* guns opened a cannonade which at once created the affair into a battle. Then it was that with a wild rush down the slippery steps that led from the upper cavern to the sea-cave, came Dolan. Clashed in one arm he held Grace, and in the hand that was free, he bore aloft a sword, the bright blade of which gleamed like a flame in the scintillating light of the torches in the various niches of the cavern.

"The *Rift* and the black flag forever!" he shouted, in a voice hoarse with rage. "Who fires on the *Rift*? Death—death to the Philistines—a boat—a boat here! I will fight to the last. Ha! ha! We shall see yet!"

He sprung into a boat, and a couple of the men in a few seconds placed him on board the *Rift*, and then Grace, in screaming accents, called for help.

"Father—father! Oh! father, save me!"

"Lights!" roared Dolan. "Lights—Japan lights, here. Bengal lights. Quick, two, three, more of them. We will see what we are about, my men. Ah! Well done that."

Bang, came another shot from the *Spray*, and the mast of the cutter, which had been before hit, at once went by the board, and fell trailing with all its hamper over the side of the *Rift*.

"The blue-lights! Quick with them. I will save you all yet."

"Help, father, Gerald! Save me! He will kill me! He has sworn it. Help! oh! help!"

"Fire!" roared Bowline, and two more guns of the *Rift* sent forth their flaming voices to the night-air.

One of the shot hit the *Nautilus*, and tore a couple of her planks to pieces. The other flew past the schooner, and made the man at its wheel feel faint, from its proximity to his head. Then those of the *Rift* who had heard Dolan's words distinctly, and had faith in his powers of mischief, and of means to save them, brought the Bengal lights he called for, and more than four or five soon blazed from different parts of the smuggling cutter.

Bang!

Another shot from the *Spray*.

Dolan's face was covered with blood, for a splinter from the side of the *Rift* had torn past his cheek, and inflicted an ugly gash.

The blue-lights irradiated the whole cavern with

their beautiful flame, and amid a vapor that came from them, and which looked like some softly-tinted, purple cloud, at sunset. Dolan rushed to the bows of the *Rift*, and there as the smoke from the guns curled about him—there, as the blue-lights placed him in strong relief against the sides of the cavern, there, amid the shouts of the living—the screams and cries of the wounded, and the groans of the dying, he held up Grace and shouted:

"A figure-head for the old *Rift*—a new figure-head! Behold her—Grace Morton! Fire, fire! Hit in the eyes her you love, and scatter to the damp air of these caverns the blood and brains of the girl you seek! Ha! ha! Fire now! Fire yet again! Behold the *Rift*—behold her sea-cavern, in which she has defied the battle and the storm—behold her new figure-head of life, of blood, and dainty flesh, and sleek young brows, and now, fire if you will! Fire, fire!"

The blue-lights reached their full radiance, and it was an awful sight to see Dolan standing on the very edge of the forward bulwarks of the *Rift*, holding that young girl aloft in his arms, with her fair face turned seaward, and her long hair floating down over her neck and shoulders—over his hands and arms—over his face, and smearing itself in the blood that came from the gash he had received from the splinter.

She might have been seen a mile off—so closely was she defined and relieved by the now brilliant and beautiful lights in the cavern.

She screamed aloud; and then there was an answering cry, and the *Nautilus* dashed forward, as if instinct with life, to the entrance of the cavern.

"I am here—here to save—here to avenge! God bless me now!"

It was the voice of Captain Morton, who was horrified and amazed to find the daughter, whom he believed to be in safety at the house of Admiral Clifford, there in that cavern, in the arms, and in the power of the villain, Dolan.

"Father—father!"

"I am here, Grace—my Grace. Mercy!"

"Ha!" laughed Dolan. "It is my turn now."

There was one more flash from the twenty-four-pound gun on board the *Spray*. They had not clearly seen, in consequence of the smoke that enveloped them, what was going on in the sea-cave. Captain Morton dashed himself bodily against the helm of his little yacht, and she swung into the course of the shot, which tore through her slender sides, and left her almost a wreck, at the entrance of the sea-cave.

"Fire!" shouted Dolan—"fire!"

A couple more guns were fired from the *Rift*. They passed over the *Nautilus*, and struck the *Spray*, on board of which a drum was heard to beat to cease firing; for Lieutenant Green had just seen the critical situation of the *Nautilus*.

Then, as the smoke began to curl away, Captain Morton, in a loud voice—but one the tone of which sufficiently portrayed the agony of his soul—called out:

"Monster!—Unheard of villain! give me my daughter! Fight, if you will; but fight as man should fight, and not with the blood of children! Give me my child!"

"Safety to all, and to the *Rift*. Grant that, and the girl is yours; or, otherwise, she dies!"

"Father, he will kill me!"

"My child—my Grace! Oh! this is terrible. All—all, I grant! All—all you ask!"

"The boats!" cried several of the crew of the *Rift*.

A couple of well-armed boats from the *Spray* now pulled up to the mouth of the cavern. In one was Mr. Green in command, and the other, Mr. Royle.

"Board her!" cried Lieutenant Green—"board her at once, my men, and she is yours!"

"No, no!" shouted Captain Morton. "No, spare me—spare my daughter!"

"Your daughter, sir? Good God!"

They all saw the perilous position of Grace, as firmly and rigidly—feeling no fatigue in the wild excitement of his rage and fear—Dolan still held her up in the bow of the cutter.

"I make my terms," he cried. "Do you agree? Safety for me and mine—for me, for my crew, and for the *Rift*, or death to the girl."

"I dare not," said Lieutenant Green. "Hold, Dolan—for that I suppose is your name—if you have any hope of mercy here or hereafter, you will surrender that girl to her father here who made no war against you, and is foreign to all these proceedings of curs. Be a man, if you be a smuggler and a pirate."

"Consent—consent to my terms, or she dies!"

"I consent—you know I consent."

"Villain!" cried Captain Morton, "even now you dare not carry out your threat. The coward looks out at your eyes, and you dread that I should tear your false heart from your breast, if you so much as injured a hair of my darling's head. Monstrous villain, have at you now."

The crippled *Nautilus* had drifted by the tide so far into the sea-cave, that it was comparatively close to the bows of the *Rift*, and then Captain Morton made from the deck of his own little vessel one terrific leap, and half fell—half lit upon the bulwarks of the *Rift*.

The pirates raised a wild cry, and Captain Dolan, clasping one arm around the waist of Grace, sprang with her over the other side of the *Rift* into the sea. There was a rush of pirates upon Captain Morton, and there was a rush of the boats' crews from the *Spray* to board the *Rift*, and a terrific hand-to-hand conflict ensued.

Captain Dolan swam with his right arm free, and Grace held firmly in his left. Amid the roar of the fight, the smoke from the discharge of the pistols, and in the dire confusion of those few minutes of strife, he reached the steps that led to the inner cavern, and made good his footing on them.

"I have her still," he gasped; "I have her still. She will save me yet; let them all perish—I shall save myself yet as the price of her safety, or I will kill her!"

He reached the top of the flight of steps; he turned one moment to look at the wild fight below, and he raised a cry of triumph. It was his last.

Grace was torn from his arms, and the voice of Gerald was patent in his ears, as he cried:

"No—no, villain that you are! She is saved from you even now—may Heaven be thanked!"

Dolan uttered a howl of rage, and made a rush upon Gerald; but there was the flash of the steel blade of a cutlass; and Jack, who was close to Gerald, said, quietly:

"Avast there, you lubber! What's in the wind now, that you want to steer foul of other folks? There you go. It's a good thing, Master Gerald, you know the way into this caboose of a place by the plateau, as you call it."

The blade struck Dolan in the center of the forehead, and he fell backward headlong down the steps into the sea.

The cries and shouts ceased on board the Rift, and the pirates were beaten. A few only, half-stunned and bleeding, yet lived upon the deck of the cutter. Then Captain Morton, with frantic cries, called upon the lieutenant to aid him in searching for Grace, and she heard the tones of that newly-found and so newly-lost father; and from the protecting arms of Gerald, she called out:

"I am here, father—I am here, and safe. Gerald has saved me!"

There was an instant leap into a boat, and once more father and daughter rushed to each other's arms. The men of the Spray, with torches, ran through the caverns, and soon there was a loud shouting, and they brought to the sea-cave what looked like a dead body of a woman; but it was Mrs. Wagner, who still had some life in her. And so soon as she came into the sphere of the torchlights, she called out, in a raving voice:

"The boy—the boy! Where is the boy Gerald? Where is Admiral Clifford? I cannot die yet. Oh, where is he?"

"I am here," said the admiral, standing up in a boat. "What would you wish me?"

"Gerald is your long-lost son! The man Dolan was by you captured nearly twenty years ago, and on your testimony transported. He came back, and turned what he is, and stole your infant boy. His object has been to make him a pirate, and for you to judge him to death. You will find the child's clothes in the cavern. Help me! Oh, Heaven! I am dying! Pardon—pardon—par—"

The guilty spirit fled; and then, with a cry of such heart-joy as he never in this world expected to hear uttered, Admiral Clifford embraced Gerald, his long-lost, much-mourned boy.

Our tale is over. Before leaving the cavern in the cliff, the admiral and Captain Morton, with tears of joy, placed the hands of their children one in the other.

The few pirates who survived were sent to a penal settlement. Captain Mocquet and Marie went to France with the best wishes of their friends. Martin and Joseph were liberated on Gerald's evidence in their favor. Captain Morton took into his own yacht the boy Charles whom he had encountered on the beach; and in two years from these events, a still very youthful pair were mated at the Church of the Holy Trinity at Falmouth, amid a large assemblage of British and American officers, and then set sail for New York.

The names of the bride and bridegroom were Grace Morton and Gerald Clifford!

THE END.

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